



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

### Usage guidelines

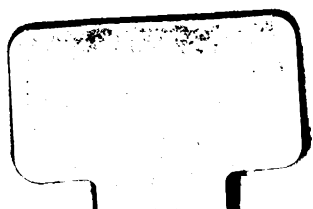
Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

### About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>







*Y. Bight. Thurso. Aug. 10. 1881.*

Our

# Scandinavian Forefathers:

## TWO LECTURES,

BY

WILLIAM MILLER, A.M.,

PREACHER OF THE GOSPEL.

---

DELIVERED AND PUBLISHED FOR BEHOOF OF THE THURSO BENEVOLENT  
INSTITUTION.

---

247136 c. 11

THURSO:

A. RUSSELL, HIGH STREET.

EDINBURGH: JOHN MENZIES, 2 HANOVER ST.; E. BREMNER, 12 LEITH ST.

GLASGOW: DAVID BRYCE, 129 BUCHANAN ST.

ABERDEEN: ROBERT WALKER, 92 BROAD STREET.

---

MDCCCLXII.

**SOLD BY THE PUBLISHERS,  
AND BY  
PETER REID, WICK.  
WILLIAM RAE, WICK,  
JOHN GEORGE, PULTENEYTOWN.  
ROBERT ANDERSON, KIRKWALL.  
J. RAE, STROMNESS.**

TO THE  
YOUNG MEN OF THURSO,  
WITH THE PRAYER THAT THEY MAY FIND  
THE PERFECT FREEDOM, TRUTH, AND SYMPATHY,  
WHICH IT IS OUR HEREDITARY CHARACTERISTIC TO SEEK FOR,  
BY SUBMITTING THEMSELVES  
TO HIM IN WHOM ALL PERFECTION DWELLS,  
THE SON OF MAN, THE SAVIOUR OF THE WORLD,  
*These Lectures*  
ARE AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED  
BY  
WILLIAM MILLER.







## PREFATORY NOTE.

---

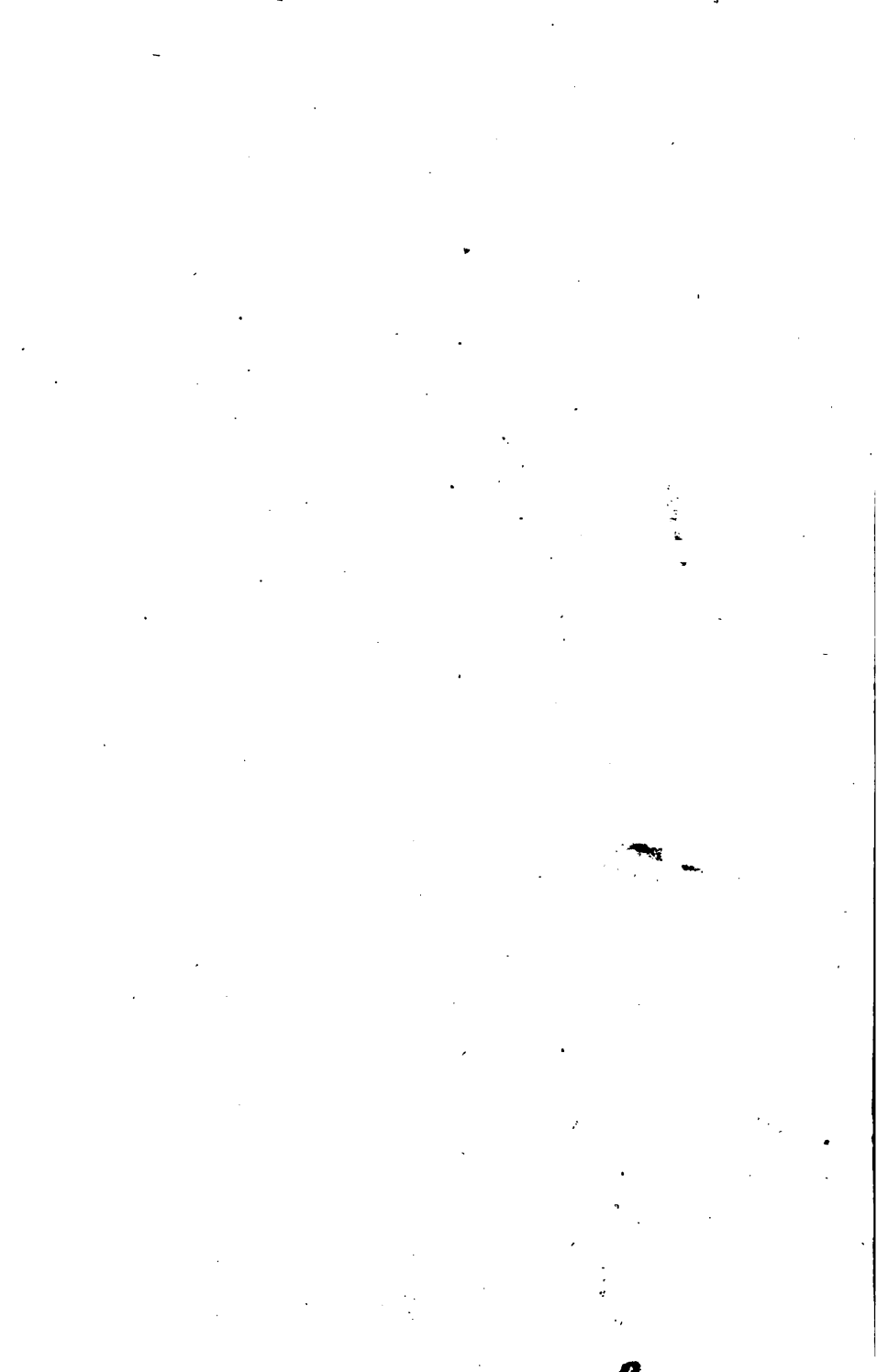
THE Thurso Benevolent Institution, in aid of which these Lectures were delivered, is intended for the education of the female children of the poor belonging to the town and neighbourhood. Such of the parents as are able pay a very small fee; but, with this exception, it is supported entirely by voluntary contribution.

The occasion and object of the Lectures will be best shown by inserting part of the original advertisement—

“At the request of the Committee of the THURSO BENEVOLENT INSTITUTION, the Rev. WILLIAM MILLER, A.M., will deliver two Lectures in aid of a fund for building an INFANT CLASS-ROOM and a WASHING HOUSE, in connection with the Institution. Subject of Lectures:—*Our Scandinavian Fore-fathers*. Lecture 1. Their Origin, Institutions, and Religion. Lecture 2. Their Character and Literature.”

After some hesitation, I agreed to comply with the request for the publication of the Lectures, addressed to me by the committee and others, provided it appeared that my doing so would be of any pecuniary benefit to the institution. The number of subscribers is already such that a considerable sum will certainly remain in the hands of the committee after the cost of publication has been defrayed. I therefore deem myself warranted in laying these pages before the public, since, at the very least, some benefit will thereby accrue to an institution most worthy of cordial support. Were it not for this, I would scarcely let a production see the light which has been so hastily composed; and which, from the extent of its subject, is necessarily so superficial. Other demands too upon my time prevent my doing anything now in the way of addition or improvement. Indeed, the endeavour to make these lectures a worthy presentation of their theme, might end in my publishing not a pamphlet but a bulky volume. Therefore, with the exception of some unimportant omissions, and the addition of the notes and appendix, they are printed exactly as delivered.

W. M.



# OUR SCANDINAVIAN FOREFATHERS.

---

## LECTURE I.

BEFORE entering on the subject which is to engage our attention for these two evenings, there are a few things which I think it right to mention, by way of preface or apology.

Thus, as regards the subject I have chosen, it is not—at least at first sight—one which has any great connection with the object aimed at by those at whose request I appear before you. Nor is it perhaps in all respects the theme which my own inclination would lead me to fix on for a lecture here. But the fact is that, if I were to have the pleasure of addressing you at all, I had no alternative but to select a subject not requiring much investigation, or thoughtful preparation. For these I have had no time. And thus, I am compelled to ask you to accompany me in the exploration of a field which has been long familiar to me, and in which I may serve as guide, without much extra trouble. Further, I must warn you at the outset that, on this same plea of want of time for investigation, I cannot vouch for the minute accuracy of any historical details that may be set forth. In the composition of these papers I have had almost no access to works bearing on their subject; and though, for several years, I have paid some little attention to Scandinavian history and literature, still one cannot be expected always to remember, with perfect correctness, the dates and other minute though important particulars which form the skeleton of history—especially when, as is in this matter the case with me, the attention has for a considerable time been turned in a wholly different direction. My aim is to present you with a true and, if possible, a vivid picture of bygone times, and of the character of those who were actors in them; and this aim, fortunately, it is possible in some measure to fulfil, even though there may be some mistake as to the name of a poet or king, the date of a battle, or the precise locality of the planting of a colony. And surely the subject of these lectures is one which may suitably challenge some attention from us, whoever else may afford to pass it by. From those of whom I am to speak, you, the men of Caithness, are descended. By knowing them,

you may better know yourselves. Their character you to a large extent inherit; and many and powerful as have been the influences which the slow-creeping centuries have exerted, you are in no inappreciable degree moulded by what your forefathers were a thousand years gone by, in Danish plains, and by wild Norwegian firths. Often have I regretted that so little is commonly known among us of our own corner of Scotland—that so little interest is taken in traditions and remnants of ancient custom, which, if reported to us as found in some distant land, would move us greatly. If some here be stirred up to inquire into and to meditate more than before on these things, I shall feel that my time has not been spent in vain. For surely none of us is wholly unaware of the benefit that comes from living under the power of old historic associations—of being reminded by the objects that daily meet the eye, of the joys and sorrows, the efforts and achievements, of past generations. Here we have indeed nothing to remind us of struggles for liberty, civil or religious; no heart-ennobling memorials of the aspirings of genius, or the victories of art. This is no land

“Where each old poetic mountain  
Inspiration breathes around;”

Yet do these long reaches of rolling sea, those walls of sternest cliff, that form our northern beauty; and, most of all, the old grey towers that sentinel our shores—yet do these tell to ears that are open to hear their voice, of a history not void of interest or instruction. They point back to a stern, rude time, when, amid the overthrow of nations and the fierce incursions of a fresh and powerful race, God, far down in the thick darkness, was laying the strong foundations of that temple of order, and peace, and purity, which, with many a check and seeming failure, He has been slowly but surely building up in Christendom; and which shall one day, far distant as the prospect perhaps seems as yet, be all completed; and its every tower surmounted by the cross, shall rise above the hills, the habitation of the Lord, and draw the nations unto it.

Well then, let me begin by telling you, as briefly as I can, who these Scandinavians were; and how it has come to pass that we should have had them for our forefathers.

As far back as European history can be traced, Scandinavia, or the countries known now as Sweden, Norway, and Denmark, sent forth large armies, or rather nations, which precipitated themselves on the fertile regions of the south. The place of these emigrants was ever supplied by new invaders from the east; and at some period, which cannot now be accurately fixed, but certainly prior to the year 300, a tribe, advancing from the plains of Russia and Poland, thus took possession of these countries, and there their descendants have ever since remained. This tribe was headed by a chieftain of the name of Odin—so at least their tradition has unvaryingly affirmed; and this name we shall find it of importance to remember

by-and-by. For several centuries our knowledge of their history is chiefly, or I may say almost wholly conjectural. Like other peoples, they have a mass of legend and tradition connected with the early stages of their national existence. But, while much of this may be true, much is certainly false; and we scarcely possess a criterion for judging between the two.

It is not until the year 700, that anything can be said to be known about their actions, their character, or their customs. Until then, all that we see by history's light is a few gigantic forms of half mythologic heroes, and a wild confusion of incessant warfare. This, however, we know with certainty; that these centuries had sufficed greatly to change the character and habits of the former wanderers on the Scythian plains. The nature of the country where they dwelt—surrounded on all sides by the sea, and penetrated besides by long fiords or lochs, running, some of them, as much as a hundred miles into the interior—necessarily turned their attention to navigation, and in process of time made them, as they and their descendants have ever since remained, the finest seamen in the world. Thus, just by the necessities of their daily life, were they taught the art which was to be their pathway to greatness—the means by which they were to influence the world, and contribute their share to the fulfilment of God's purposes in the human family.

In the course of the eighth century it was, that the Scandinavians first became known throughout Europe. Gradually they had become so skilled in navigation that the perils of the North Sea and the Atlantic Ocean, which, at the utmost of their maritime skill, had terrified the Romans, no longer daunted them; and, before the year 750, they had visited every portion of the western coast of the continent, and even made their way through the Straits of Gibraltar. Wherever they came, it was to ravage and destroy. Landing from their galleys, they attacked the cities near the shore; and, after plundering them of whatever valuables could be easily removed, and carrying away the strongest of the inhabitants as slaves, they often set them on fire before they left to seek for other prey. Fierce and unscrupulous heathens too as they were, they sometimes spared neither age nor sex. No wonder that the visits of these pirate *Vikings*, or Sea Kings, as they called themselves, were dreaded more than pestilence or famine.\* Even had the nations they invaded been as warlike as themselves, it would have been difficult for them, being quite unskilled in seamanship, to take any effectual measures to resist their incursions; and, instead of being warlike, the nations of Europe were then sunk in sloth and vice—needing, above all things, some infusion of more vigorous blood. By-and-by the terror inspired was such, that the landing of a few boat loads of Vikings would make whole counties flee in terror. Even Charlemagne, in the zenith of his power, is recorded to have wept with shame and

\* Not that the word *Viking*, as is commonly enough supposed, signifies *Sea King*; but that both terms were used to denote these rovers. They were named Vikings because of their remaining in the *vits* or havens to watch for passing ships.

vexation when he saw their galleys in the distance; and, in England, prayer was habitually offered in the churches for deliverance from their attacks. For some generations they continued these fierce descents, attempting nothing farther; but, ere long, they began to take permanent possession of the most convenient portions of the territories which they visited. The increase of the population, internal quarrels, the wish to be nearer to their plundering ground (for so they regarded all countries but their own),—these causes, and many others, conspired to make many choose their permanent habitation at a distance from Scandinavia. Once the attention of the nation was turned in this way to colonising, their foreign wars took rather the form of regular invasions than of mere inroads; and gradually the Viking or piratical expeditions became less frequent, though they were not wholly discontinued or looked upon as at all discreditable, for several centuries. Many a one who at home was a loyal subject, an indulgent master, an affectionate parent, and a zealous promoter of all the arts of peace, spent an occasional summer—perhaps as much for amusement as for gain—in sailing the seas in quest of ships to plunder, and of seaport towns to lay under contribution.\* But, before the end of the tenth century, at which time it was that Scandinavia was first Christianized, traces of cruelty or wanton destruction almost wholly disappear from the narratives of the Viking cruises.

The nearness of Orkney and Shetland to their own coast, the security of their harbours, and the weakness of their aboriginal inhabitants, made it natural that they should be among the first of the lands thus colonised; and so thoroughly were they taken possession of, that scarcely a vestige now remains, in all probability, of the Celtic race, who dwelt in them originally. From Orkney the Norsemen, or Norwegians—for it was mainly the Norwegian branch of the Scandinavians that settled in this neighbourhood, the Danes and Swedes extending themselves in other directions—from Orkney, the Norsemen passed over ere long to Caithness; and though no records remain to tell us precisely how or when they did so, it is certain that they had taken possession of portions of this county before the year 850. By this time the Scandinavian ferocity, though not their valour, energy, or enterprise, had somewhat abated; and some among them began to turn their attention to literature, and, most of all, to history. And, in the earliest authentic records of which I, at least, have any knowledge, Caithness appears as in intimate connection with Norway. In this connection it remained for many centuries; and though it was only from the north-eastern corner of the county that the Norsemen

\* They acted just as their descendants Cavendish, Drake, and Hawkins did towards the Spaniards in the days of Queen Elisabeth. But for the glow of Christian sentiment that plays over the narratives of the 16th century, one of them might almost be mistaken for an account of a Viking expedition in the 10th: the honour, the chivalry, the courage were as great in the one time as the other; and if there were among the Vikings many of most wanton cruelty—a disgrace to the name of men—so certainly were there also among the Buccaneers.

drove out the original possessors so completely as they did in Orkney, still they soon extended their rule over the whole. So wholly identified was this corner of the island with Norway, forming, indeed, with Orkney, the most powerful of all its earldoms, that one of the early Scottish kings, in a dispute with the Norwegian monarch, threatened, as his utmost defiance, that if his demands were not satisfied, "he would plant his standard upon the cliffs of Thurso." There are, as some of you are no doubt aware, legends in the county of the Scandinavians being defeated and expelled. But these refer only to the defeat of bands of invaders, seeking to dispossess those who, like themselves, had come from Norway at the first. There were many such invasions; but from the very earliest date to which history bears us back, Caithness, as a whole, was possessed by those of Scandinavian descent. And of this possession we need not go far to look for the proofs. There are indeed tokens that, except in Canisbay, the original Gaelic speaking population were allowed to remain as labourers, or serfs; but we have only to listen to the dialect, only to remember the names of our burns, and lochs, and farms, to have it proved that the mass of our forefathers belonged to the race that held Europe in terror for generations, and that has been the means of awakening whatever spirit of energy and freedom is characteristic of it now. If you draw an imaginary line from the mouth of the Water of Forss to Lybster, you will find to the east of it scarcely a single name which is not manifestly Scandinavian; while to the west—that is, in the more inland and less fertile districts—Gaelic names preponderate, though the others are not uncommon; shewing this, that in these districts, fewer of the conquerors found it their interest to settle. Thus we have the countless names that end in *ster*—the equivalent this of the Norwegian *soetr*, *i.e.* farm, or rather shelling, or outfield pasture. There is the word itself preserved in SEATER, and its endless compounds, such as THOSTER, or THORS-SOETR; TISTER, or TYRS-SOETE; SCRABSTER, LYBSTER, STEMSTER, CAMSTER, ULBSTER, ULV's, or OLAF'S-SOETR, and so on. So too, there are the numerous compounds in *gio* (a word of which I need not surely explain the meaning)\*—FRESGIO, or FREYA'S-GIO, GIRNIGIO, RUGGIO, STAXIGIO, and the rest. Then we have *Forss*, the pure Scandinavian for waterfall; and *Wick*, meaning bay or haven, standing, not only alone, but also in composition, as in FRESWICK, or FREYA'S-WICK, and DWARWICK. Then again, we have *dale*, the Norse equivalent for the Gaelic *strath*; as in DALE itself, TORMSDALE, HARPSDALE, RUMSDALE, HALLADALE and BERRIEDALE. Thus I might go over almost all the names on the north and east of Caithness. All of them tell, unmistakably, of the Scandinavian descent of those who gave them. Our own town, I need hardly tell you, derives its

\* The fact is, that unless one has seen the sort of place denoted by it, it is not very easily explained. For the benefit, however, of southern readers, I may say that a *gio* is a firth, firth, or loch, measured by yards instead of miles—a tongue, as it were, of sea, running into the land, and surrounded by lofty rocks.

name from the river on which it stands—THOR'S AA, or the river of Thor; of whom more immediately. And finally, let me point you to HOLBORN, or HÖLLIBIÖRN; that is HÖLLA'S *bairn*, or the child of Holla, the infernal goddess of northern mythology; a name which one who is familiar with the awful glories of that most majestic headland, will not wonder that these men of old should have given to the rocks where, in the darkness and the storm, many a home-bound ship that had sailed, unharmed, from Africa to Iceland, went down, with all on board, to an instant and a nameless doom.

So much, then, for our connection with these ancient sea-kings. Not, indeed, that Caithness-men generally are descended from them alone. There is undoubtedly in most a large admixture of Gaelic, or Celtic blood. Yet even the Celts, who were allowed to remain of old, were under Norwegian laws and lords; they were forced to conform to Norwegian customs; and derived what civilization they had wholly from a Norwegian source. Thus our character is still more Scandinavian than even our descent. Those of you who are Gaelic scholars must know how largely the dialect of that language spoken here, is mixed with English, as is commonly supposed, but in reality, with ancient Norse—one of the chief fountain heads of the English tongue: a fact which confirms, what is well known from independent sources, that the most purely Celtic of the population were under Scandinavian influence.

Let us turn now to the character and exploits of those with whom we are so intimately connected. In this lecture let me tell you something of the influences by which their character was formed, and chiefly of their civil and religious institutions. Then in to-morrow's lecture, I shall try to set clearly before you what that character was, and what Scandinavian influence on the world at large has been; and shall, to some small extent, let these our ancestors speak to you for themselves, through the medium of the literature they have left us. To-night, then, let us think of the influences by which the character of the Scandinavians was formed—that character which, to so large an extent, has determined yours and mine.

Amongst these influences, a foremost place must be assigned to the nature of the country in which they had dwelt for centuries, before they emerged into the light of history. Now it would require a lecture for itself even to open up this wide and interesting question of the influence of scenery upon character. The philosophy of it cannot be touched upon at all. Suffice it to say, that no country can well be imagined better suited than Scandinavia to mould a hardy, bold, and energetic race. The mountains among which they had to hunt the animals used for food, necessitated constant and great exertion; exertion invigorating for the body, and tending in virtue of the strange connection subsisting between the body and the mind, to give a determination and energy and strength to the whole personal character. The Norseman could scarcely move a step on level ground—he had difficulties continually to encounter and overcome;



and thus he learnt to rejoice in toil, and long for exertion and adventure. And on the other hand, the sea, which still more than the mountains was the Norseman's home, saved him from that life of unskilled and unthinking exertion into which the simple mountaineer is so apt to fall. Difficult as are the mountains to labour and to live among, they are yet ever the same. Learn once the way through a particular pass, learn once to climb a particular precipice, and though the bodily exertion may be equal every time you do so, the mind may ever after be almost dormant in the action. But not so with those whose avocations call them to encounter the dangers of the sea. Ceaseless and sudden in its changes, it demands the ever open eye, the mind always on the alert, and the skilled and steady hand. Thus, by the two great features of their home, were our forefathers trained on the one hand to vigorous activity, on the other, to daring and enterprise, and presence of mind. And besides all this, it was from the silent influence of the scenery, of mingled hill and flood, of tumbling torrent and storm-tossed ocean, of riven rock and dark ravine, and forests of the steadfast sombre pine, that the Norsemen drew that tone of earnest sadness and noble dissatisfaction with themselves and their possessions, that has ever characterised them. Let these suffice as hints on the influence on their character of the scenery of their home.

An effect not less powerful was produced by the laws and institutions under which they lived. These, it is true, were as certainly a result as a cause of their character. Being at all times in their history free, their laws were but the expression of themselves. Yet they perpetuated their character, and being in all their leading features fully in operation before the nation came into contact with others, they may fairly be regarded as a leading element in making them what they were. The essential idea of these laws and institutions may be expressed in a word—it is that of personal freedom. Unlike the tendency of Greek and Roman government—unlike that of the feudal system prevailing in Europe at the times of which I write—most of all unlike that of the clan or patriarchal system prevailing among the Celtic tribes—the chief thing aimed at in the Scandinavian polity, was the protection of individual rights, and the seeking of room for individual action and development.\* And it was this knowledge from a human stand-point of the importance of the individual, met and deepened by the solemn sense of personal accountability awakened by the living Truth embodied upon earth

\* Such was the spirit of their laws in their native seats, and as towards each other. But whenever they took possession of a new country—settling there as a colony of conquerors—they adopted in dealing with their subjects, the laws, and often the mode of government, which were already in operation. Thus we find the Normans adopting the feudal system, and carrying it out most vigorously; and with the Scandinavian chiefs of our own Highland clans the patriarchal rule was most fully in operation.

It may however be a question how far this clan or patriarchal system was truly Celtic, and how far it arose from the conquest itself of the Celts by their Scandinavian chiefs. This manifestly had some influence in making it what it was, but how much I cannot say. So little attention has in this country been paid to such topics, that it is impossible for one who has neither the knowledge, nor the time necessary for much original inquiry, to speak with any certainty about them.

1800 years ago, that has been the source of all the civil freedom which the nations have enjoyed since then. As instances of the spirit of these northern institutions let me mention such as these. The tenure of land was that denominated *udal*. Every freeborn Scandinavian was a landholder, subject to no superior whatever; but himself an absolute possessor. He needed no titles or charters from king or parliament. And then, on the death of a father of a family, his possessions were equally divided among all his children. Of course it is not my wish to maintain that Scandinavian customs were in all things right, or that ours ought to be modelled after them. I mention this only as an example of how strong was the sense of freeborn right—how great the dislike to any sort of involuntary subjection, such as necessarily arises when the land is in the hands of a few. Be it remembered too, that in a country so thinly peopled, the inconvenience of such a plan was small, compared with what it would be in one like our own; and also, that this mode of inheritance was in practice greatly modified by a custom which, when the nation was most vigorous, was almost universal. Namely this—that the more enterprising members of a family made over their claim upon the land to some one of their number; receiving in return an equivalent in money, with which they helped to fit out some piratical or colonizing expedition. Yet these *udal* rights could not be wholly alienated. On these members of the family, or any of their descendants—no matter how many generations had elapsed—returning and refunding this money, they could at any time reclaim the land. So far indeed was this feeling of equality and equal hereditary right carried, that the crown was similarly inherited. The kingdom itself was, according to law, divisible among all the children of the monarch: an ordinance manifestly fraught with danger and inconvenience, but which was not unfrequently carried out, though more often some arrangement was made in the lifetime of the king, whereby the nation remained entire. This leads me to speak of the Scandinavian mode of government. Every *udaller*, or *bondi*, as he was more commonly named—that is every one having an *udal* claim to any portion of the land—had the right of appearing at the parliament, or *Thing*; and, when there, had an equal vote. Every district had its *Thing*, where every matter in question, civil, criminal, or of whatever kind, could be brought, and was finally decided; and all the *Things* were independent of one another; though, practically of course, some few in the country led the rest in all matters of public politics. At these *Things* the poorest *bondi* was on a footing of perfect equality with the most powerful earl (or *jarl* as is the true Norse pronunciation), and even with the king himself. There are many instances of the kings being defeated in the *Things* by the simple eloquence of some unknown *bondi*, and any attempt to employ coercive measures—though such attempts from their foreseen results were but rarely made—at once banded the nation

against him who put them forth.\* These Things usually sat in the open air, and generally in some place as sequestered, if at the same time central, as could be found. The Thing of this part of Caithness must, for a time, have met in the place that still bears the name, TAIN; and the place where that of the Latheron district convened seems to have been on the top of an extensive, but easily accessible, *clell*, in the side of the little bay of Forse, to the south of Lybster.† Thus too in Ross we have proof of the existence of two separate Things, in the names of TAIN and DINGWALL—that is, THINGVALLA, or the valley of the Thing, a name most common still in all parts of Scandinavia and Iceland. Thus you see that, even in the ordinarily reputed Celtic county of Ross, the Norsemen bore the rule.

Between the udallers and the royal family there existed no separate order. There were indeed jarls who exercised a powerful influence in various ways on which I cannot enter; but the office seldom descended from father to son, and was in no case necessarily hereditary, save in that of our own earldom—the possessors of which were to all intents and purposes independent monarchs. The king himself, too—though as captain-general of the forces, and administrator of the laws, his powers were ample—was yet always held as responsible to the Things; and he was in many ways reminded that he held authority only as the representative of the people, and that, personally, he was but an ordinary udaller. So jealous were the Norwegians at least of kingly power that no guards were provided for the monarch, nor was there any castle or stated revenue. Over and above his private possessions, he had no right but that of quartering himself, his family, and attendants, upon each of his subjects in succession, for a length of time proportioned to their means. And they often gave his majesty sufficiently unceremonious notice to pack up, when the legal time was at an end. This was termed going into “guest quarters;” and was certainly a mode of supporting the king not calculated to give too high a notion of royal power, or greatly to encourage royal pretensions.

I know none of the institutions of the Scandinavians exhibiting more strongly their love of freedom and fair-play, than the way in which the slaves were treated. They were denominated *thralls*, and consisted almost solely of the prisoners taken in Viking expeditions. Commonly, when they were once brought to their captor’s home, a certain sum was fixed upon, which, as soon as they had paid, they were freed from thrall-dom. So small was the ransom, at least in

\* The very frequent battles at the Things must not be confused with attempts to coerce the courts themselves—of which, indeed, there is scarcely a recorded instance. The right of wager of battle, which was but lately swept from our own statute book, belonged to every free born Scandinavian. A lawsuit might be at any time withdrawn from the Thing, and fought out, either then or afterwards, in a fair and honourable manner. In the early ages such combats were frequent; and often the friends of the disputants took part on either side, until half perhaps of the members of the Thing—who the day before had met in friendly deliberation, and who would next day quietly resume business as if nothing had happened in the interval—were engaged in deadly conflict.

† I may explain again only for the benefit of southern readers, that a *clell* or *stack* is a mass of rock of some considerable height, and surrounded by the sea—at least at high water.

some cases, that one of their historians in speaking of a very successful Viking, says that some of his thralls redeemed themselves in a year, most of them in two years; and all, he adds, "who had any luck, could do it in three years." The slaves were allowed to possess property of their own; and once they had ransomed themselves, they and their descendants formed a class called the "Un-free," who were on an equality with the udallers in all respects, save that they had no voice in the Thing, and of course no share in the land. But neither were they bound by the laws enacted by the Things. Having no voice in them, it seemed to these free children of the north but fair that they should not be subject to them. Thus, when on one occasion the exportation of certain articles had been prohibited by the Thing, a merchant came in quest of them to the same udaller whose easiness with his slaves has just been mentioned. He told the merchant that he could not dispose of his property, but that some of his thralls had a quantity of the required article; and on applying to them, the desired cargo was obtained. So different was domestic slavery in heathen Scandinavia, a thousand years ago, from what it is in a Christianised nation in the middle of the 19th century. And it is to me matter of regret that, on the part of those claiming kindred with these men of old, there should be so much sympathy, or any vestige of sympathy at all, with the efforts that are being made in our day to secure the perpetuation of this blackest villany.

As the last of the civil institutions characteristic of our forefathers which I can notice now, let me mention that of trial by jury. It is from Scandinavia alone that the characteristic features of this great safeguard of freedom, with all the advantages derived from it, have been transplanted into Britain. It is commonly, but most inaccurately, spoken of as a Saxon institution. But though the antiquarian discussion which proves this to be incorrect would be out of place here, it is now established beyond a doubt that it was unknown to the Saxons, and introduced into England by the northern colonists.

I cannot even allude to the criminal laws, to the mode in which the defence of the country was conducted, or even to the social condition and manners of the Scandinavians—interesting as they all are, and appropriate as their introduction would be in discussing the influences by which the Scandinavian character was formed. The institutions at which I have glanced are, however, enough to shew its indomitable love of freedom; and it is not difficult to understand how a people living under such a polity should exhibit, on the one hand, manly energy and determination, vigorous eloquence, self-reliance, love of justice, and unbounded patriotism; and, on the other, not a little of that fickleness, of that excessive love of diplomatic stratagem, and tendency to uncalled-for resistance of rightful authority, which are the evils ever ready to result from so democratic a constitution.

Like laws and institutions, the literature of a people is one of the chief formative influences of their character. But the literature of the Scandinavians I shall notice rather as an exponent of what their character came to be. I could not but notice it in that division of my subject, and I cannot therefore treat of it also in this. The only other source of the character of the race which can be alluded to is their religion.

Equally with their laws, this was emphatically an expression of themselves—a consequence of their character. Yet not the less on that account, was it a most potent agent in preserving and developing it. Until almost the end of the tenth century, all the inhabitants of Scandinavia itself (except some of the southern Danes), and many too of the colonists who had settled in other lands, were heathens still. About that time, chiefly through the efforts of two kings of the name of OLAF, Norway, parts of Sweden and Denmark, Caithness, Orkney, Shetland, and Iceland began to be, after a fashion, Christianised. Of these monarchs, the earlier, named Olaf Tryggve's son, was one of the noblest kings of whom we read; and the latter, though certainly the less worthy of the honour, has been canonised, and is known in history as St Olaf. The methods these crowned missionaries used were certainly not always such as can be approved of. For instance, with regard to our own country. One of the Olafs—at this moment I forget which—soon after he had come to the knowledge of Christianity, was sailing through the Pentland Firth on his way home, full of zeal for the conversion of his countrymen. There he met with our earl, with whom he was on the best of terms. He boarded his galley, however, and taking him prisoner, offered him then and there the alternative of baptism or death. After some discussion and hesitation, he had the satisfaction of seeing the former chosen. The ceremony was performed by a priest who accompanied the king, though up till this time, the earl was very probably in entire ignorance of the tenets of his new religion. Certainly such a mode of procedure is not for a moment to be defended. Yet, let us remember that it is not by the standard of an age of sloth and ease that these times are to be judged. Indeed, I know few histories more calculated than that of the evangelising of the north, to show in what various forms the living truth takes hold of the minds of men; how powerful it is, even when its lustre is obscured by mighty errors; and in spite of how much darkness, and from how great a distance, the souls whom God is leading struggle towards the light. Yes, and ere we condemn King Olaf, let us ask which is better, an untaught zeal like his, or the quiet contentment and half dead faith which is content to possess the bread of life and slumber over it, while millions on every side are striving hard to stifle their cravings after truth with the husks that only swine can eat.

But to return. I must give you a bare outline of the Norseman's belief, when he was still a heathen. In it you will see portrayed

that ferocity which made him so terrible of old, but which, softened by a Christian civilisation, has been the seed of the adventure and energy and enterprise which he has left as his legacy to the world, and, most of all, to Britain. The gods whom they worshipped were just gigantic reflections of themselves. It is not without interest to notice, that they, almost alone of any known polytheistic race, had almost no images or idols. Wonderful as it may seem, these northern barbarians possessed a power of spiritual apprehension of which the Romans and the Greeks were destitute; and as a consequence of this, they retained an awe and reverence for the objects of their worship to which these polished nations were utter strangers. First among the gods was ODIN, the chieftain under whom their forefathers had migrated from the east. Of the time when he began to be worshipped, I can say nothing. Very possibly his name gradually slipped in to represent that one God of whom in the early ages all nations knew, but whom they did not like to retain in their knowledge. Yet even Odin, who had thus been put in the place of God, was practically forgotten. He was regarded with reverence and awe; yet another step had to be taken away from God, ere an idea could be formed of a superhuman power on which their minds could quietly rest. The god whom they really adored was THOR, the son of Odin, the god of war. It was to him that sacrifices were chiefly offered, and after him more men and places were named than after most of the other gods together. He was the very ideal of a Viking. The lightning was his mallet, with which, according to them, he wandered through creation, slaying the giants, or JOTUNS, the persistent enemies of the gods. Countless are the legends about his valour, his stratagems, his defeats (for he was not always victorious), and his chivalry. He had a grim humour about him, Thor; and, with all his ferocity, could be hail-fellow-well-met and capital friends with the giant whom he would torture and kill, if he could, as soon as the time of truce was ended. I wish I had time to bring in some of the interesting legends in which he figures—to tell you how to this day, the tide is caused by his being once cheated by a giant into trying to quaff off the sea at a draught. He could not quite accomplish that, but the amount he did imbibe caused a disturbance so great that it has not yet subsided. Then again, it would amuse you to hear how he was thrown in attempting to wrestle with an old woman, who, however, turned out to be Time—how he once found shelter for the night in the thumb of a giant's *mitten*,\* and so on. These things I cannot speak of now; but I am not without hope that some will follow out the subject by means of the books which I intend to bring under your notice in my next lecture.† Childish as the outward dress of many of these legends

\* *Mitten*, I say, and not glove; for no "hand-shoe," as a German would say, was known till recently in the north save the good old mitten, with its two compartments—one for the thumb, and the other for all the rest of the fingers together.

† See Appendix.

is, they yet contain, under this trivial garb, much that is interesting, suggestive, and wise; and they cannot but rouse many a sad and earnest thought in the mind of one who reads them, remembering that in their inner meaning is contained all that was thought about the dread futurity that awaits us all, by many a darkened, but earnest and inquiring spirit.

Amongst the other gods of the Scandinavians was TYR, like Thor, a warlike deity, and one of his right-hand men in his raids upon JOTUNHEIM, or Giantdom. Then there was also FREYA, the wife of Odin, not possessed of many qualities now-a-days supposed to be excellent in women. From these four, then—Tyr, Odin, Thor, and Freya—are derived the names in our language of four out of the seven days of the week, viz.—Tuesday, which in old English is written, and I doubt not in many places is still pronounced, Tyr's-day; Wednesday, Odin's-day; Thursday; and Friday, or Freya's-day. This, of itself, is surely sufficient proof of the deep and extensive influence of the Scandinavian race in England—a subject on which I shall have more to say hereafter.

The consistent enemy of the gods, the source of all evil (and evil, according to the old Scandinavian belief, was summed up in cowardice), was LOKI. In the depths of the bygone ages, he had been expelled from the company of the gods, and since then had waged against them perpetual and implacable war. In this, his chief allies were the Jotuns, of whom I have already spoken—a name, by the way, which will remind those possessed of a classical education of the *Titans*, who, in the Greek mythology, played the same part against Jupiter as they against Thor and Odin: an interesting memorial this of the common origin of the language and beliefs of these far distant and widely dissimilar races. The most formidable of the supporters of Loki was, however, the wolf FENRIR, who also had been originally a companion of the gods, and whom they long sought in vain to master and expel. Odin had bound him repeatedly with iron, and silver, and golden chains; but these were but as tow to Fenrir. At last, a very thin cord was made of some ingredients not supposed to be very plentiful, as, for instance, the noise made by cats' feet, and the silence of women's tongues. This Fenrir was persuaded to try on in jest; but the unsuspicious-looking cord was found to defy all his efforts, and he was forthwith consigned to NIFLHEIM, the *heim* or home of cowards, the prison-house of Loki and his followers. The war between Loki and the gods was, it was believed, to be long continued; but at last Loki was to burst his prison-house, and, assembling all his forces, was in person to assail ASGAARD, the habitation, that is, of the gods, who were called the ASIR,\* or Immortals. This was delayed until such time as a ship—the name of which I am unable to recall—should be built out of the nails of dead men. From this belief originated

\* Here we have another instance of the connection in language and belief of nations that are now remote from one another. The "*Asyrs*" and the "*Syrs*" are the opposing powers of good and evil in the ancient Indian Epics.

the curious custom of paring the nails before death; in order, of course, that the completion of the ship might be delayed as long as possible. Once, however, that it was finished, the fatal time had come. Asgaard was to be scaled at last. The Asir, aided by all departed heroes, were to strive to the utmost, but in vain. Thor and Fenrir were mutually to destroy each other, and of all the hosts of evil and of good, not one was to remain alive. Amidst the universal confusion, sun, moon, and stars, neglected by their deities, were to tumble into ruin, and the RAGNAROK, or night of the gods, a night hopeless in its darkness for evermore, was to settle over all existence.

The men who, even in this rude way, bodied forth their thoughts, felt the eternal antagonism between good and evil; and even thus, out of their darkness, sent up a cry to heaven, confessing and bewailing that they knew no way of saving all that was good from ruin. Yet, hopeless as they were, it was esteemed the highest reward and glory to be ready to come to the help of Odin in the last dark conflict. To be on his side, even in ruin and in death, was the highest reward of the brave. For the reception of the spirits of the valiant, a part of Asgaard was appointed, called VALHALLA. There they awaited the end of all things. Thither went those who died valiantly in fight, and those who longed to do so; while cowards were consigned to the pool of Hölla, the goddess who ruled in Nifheim, to take part with Loki and with Fenrir. In the notion of the joys to be tasted in Valhalla, the old Scandinavian nature, ere it was yet tamed at all, rejoicing in battle and blood, comes out clearly into view. Daily the heroes there were to fight with one another until every one was slain; which, doubtless, was looked upon as a training for the final struggle, yet also as the highest of possible delights. No sooner had the last one fallen than Odin daily restored them all once more to life; and the rest of the day was spent in feasting, amid the clang of martial music, and the high-pealing songs of departed *Skalds* or poets. A pithy old Norse verse thus describes the pleasures of Valhalla; "The EINERJAR," a name denoting the "unmatched heroes":—

"The Einerjar all, upon Odin's plain,  
Hew daily each other, till all are slain;  
Then they all rise again, and ride home from the fray,  
To drink ale with the Asir till spent is the day."

Such was the old Scandinavian mythology. It is one as stern and fierce as can be well imagined. Yet was it not unrelieved by touches of deepest tenderness—tenderness all the more affecting, because seen with such a back-ground. Thus, for instance, there is the legend of BALDER, the most pathetic of any that the *Eddas* or mythologic books contain. Balder the Beautiful was the god of music and poetry and love, and possessed a very different character from that of his fierce compeers. Yet was he loved by all of them, more by far than any other. It was told in Asgaard that danger threatened Balder. The



hearts of the gods were filled with fear and sorrow. There was mourning throughout all the halls of Odin. And none could tell how the danger was to come. Not Odin himself could so pierce the veil of the future. In the sorrow of the Immortals, it was proposed that they should beg of all existing things a promise never to injure their beloved. No sooner said than done. Throughout all creation the dwellers in Asgaard wandered, and in time, by their petitions, a promise had been procured from every tree, and stone, and bird, and beast, that no harm should by it ever be done to Balder. All things had promised thus, save one—the misletoe; and it had been passed over, because by a thing so weak, surely no harm could be ever done. Rejoiced at their success, and confident of the dear one's safety now, the Asir proclaimed a feast. After it was ended, they all began to throw missiles of every kind at Balder; and it was high amusement to see how the most deadly weapons, aimed by the most unerring hands, remembering their promise, ever turned aside and flew harmless by. In the midst of the confusion Loki in some disguise stood near, and put the misletoe into the hands of one about to throw. The fatal missile sped, and unfettered by any promise, and flung by an Asir's hand, it pierced Balder to the heart. He fell to rise no more. The light of Asgaard was quenched for ever, and despairing, remorseful sorrow filled the hearts of its inhabitants. All this and the various legends connected with it, as for instance, how Odin himself descended from his throne to search, but to search in vain for Balder, is told in the Eddas with a pathos all the more affecting, that it is brief, and blunt, and unadorned.

Such, then, is an outline of our forefathers' belief, when they were heathens still. It is the last I can mention of the influences by which their character was formed. It is surely unnecessary for me to spend any time in pointing out how certain it was to make men who believed it bold, and hardy, and death-defying; to make them terrible in the fight, true to their word, but careless of the feelings of others, and coarse in their perceptions and their thoughts; and yet, not to leave them unvisited by many a passing glimpse of the beauty of tenderness and love. Nor is it consistent with the purpose of these lectures, that I should point out the meaning of this mythology, or make any comments on it. There is a meaning in it, and that of sad and earnest import. Like all other pagan dreams—and more, by far, than most of them—it tells of the deep-seated yearning of humanity. It tells of its consciousness of some sore disease—of its felt subjection to some stern, dark power, which no strength of its own can procure deliverance from. It is a confused and wailing cry—call it, if you will, a despairing yell—for Him whom we know to have been the *Desire of all nations*; the strong Deliverer, for whom, even amidst cruel rites, and bloody sacrifices, and hell-inspired beliefs, there were hearts longing, half unconsciously, in every error-darkened land.

Here, then, I must think of breaking off for to-night. I have

little more than opened ground in setting before you these subjects, and if they have not proved of interest, and that the greatest, this certainly arises from my inability to do them justice, and not from any defect in them. Now, then, let me conclude this lecture by reading to you some passages of a poem well suited to set forth the spirit inspired by the Scandinavian beliefs concerning Odin and Valhalla. I have many reasons for not deferring it until I come to speak directly of Scandinavian literature; amongst others, these:—that it sets forth specially, the effects which the beliefs just spoken of really had on the Northern tone and temper; and also, that I wish those who may not be able to be here again, to carry with them a more vivid idea than could in any other way be given, of what that tone and temper were. The poem is not a translation, but an imitation of the Scandinavian minstrelsy. It is by Motherwell, best known through his collection of ancient Scottish ballads; and though thus not itself a relic of heathen times, it really gives a better notion of what like the poems of the Vikings were, than any single translation could. No man now can fully reproduce these songs. Christianity has so entered into our lives, and so moulded the thoughts even of those who are farthest from yielding themselves wholly to its influence, that there is in all modern melodies, a deeper tone, a stronger undercurrent of aspiration, than was possible to the noblest of pagan bards. Yet this Lay is one of the most successful instances we have of real entering into all that was high and noble in the ancient heathen life. The legend on which it is founded, is one connected with our own county. Soon after the year 1000, the Scandinavians, who had long had extensive possessions in Ireland, were involved in hostilities with BRIAN BOROIOMHE, the most powerful of the Irish kings. Their king, called SIGTRYGG, was at length hard pressed by Brian, at this time an old man, but an energetic and skilful leader. At Sigtrygg's request, SIGURD, Jarl of Orkney and Caithness, assembled a large fleet, and went to his assistance. Before setting out, the mother of Sigurd presented him, according to the legend, with a standard called the LANDEYDA, or Land-ravager, on which the raven, the Scandinavian emblem, was wrought, and which possessed this property, that it was certain to lead the host who fought beneath its folds to victory, but that its bearer was doomed to death. The issue of the expedition was, that soon after Sigurd and his forces landed, a pitched battle was fought at Clontarf, near Dublin, in which, after a desperate struggle, the Irish remained masters of the field. Several standard bearers having fallen, the Jarl himself bore on the Landeyda, and accordingly was slain. In a desperate charge, one BRUADIE, or as we would now pronounce it BRODIE, had, however, killed King Brian. And thus though the Norsemen were driven back that day to their entrenchments, the Irish army, deprived of their leader, were easily discomfited afterwards, and Sigtrygg's power established more firmly than before. Thus

after all, the Landeyda did lead Sigurd's arms to victory. In Motherwell's poem, the young and sireless Harald, who had been appointed to an early and glorious death by a vision of the three goddesses who chose out the bravest heroes for Odin, is represented as volunteering to be the bearer of the fatal flag. The greater part of the poem is taken up with his death-song of defiance, poured forth as the ships are drawing near to the Irish shore. Remembering then, that we too are called to a war more terrible than was ever battled in by ancient hero, or sung by ancient skald ; remembering too, that in that new nature of which *all* we read and hear should remind us ever, there is room and call for every truly human and heart-inspiring impulse, for everything that is pure and noble, or that can rouse a high-strung, unselfish courage, let us listen now to the Lay of

### THE BATTLE FLAG OF SIGURD.

The eagle hearts of all the North  
Have left their stormy strand ;  
The warriors of the world are forth  
To choose another land !  
Again, their long keels sheer the wave,  
Their broad sheets court the breeze ;  
Again, the reckless and the brave  
Ride lords of welt'ring seas.  
Nor swifter from the well-bent bow  
Can feather'd shaft be sped,  
Than o'er the ocean's flood of snow  
Their snoring galleys tread.  
Then lift the can to bearded lip,  
And smite each sounding shield,  
Wassaille ! to every dark ribb'd ship,  
To every battle-field !  
So proudly the Skalds raise their voices of triumph,  
As the Northmen ride over the broad-bosom'd billow.

Silent the self-devoted stood  
Beside the massive tree ;  
His image mirror'd in the flood  
Was terrible to see !  
As leaning on his gleaming axe,  
And gazing on the wave,  
His fearless soul was churning up  
The death-rune of the brave.  
Upheaving then his giant form  
Upon the brown bark's prow,  
And tossing back the yellow storm  
Of hair from his broad brow ;  
The lips of song burst open, and  
The words of fire rushed out,  
And thund'ring through that martial crew  
Peal'd Harald's battle shout ;—  
It is Harald the dauntless, that lifteth his great voice,  
As the Northmen roll on with the doom-written banner.

"I bear Sigurd's battle-flag  
 Through sunshine or through gloom;  
 Through swelling surge, on bloody strand  
 I plant the scroll of doom!  
 On Scandia's loneliest, bleakest waste,  
 Beneath a starless sky,  
 The shadowy Three like meteors passed,  
 And bade young Harald die;—  
 They sang the war-deeds of his sires,  
 And pointed to their tomb;  
 They told him that this glory flag  
 Was his by right of doom.  
 Since then, where hath young Harald been,  
 But where Jarl's son should be?  
 'Mid war and waves the combat keen  
 That raged on land or sea!"

So sings the fierce Harald, the thirster for glory,  
 As his hand bears aloft the dark, death-laden banner.

"Mine own death's in this clenched hand!  
 I know the noble trust;  
 These limbs must rot on yonder strand—  
 These lips must lick its dust.  
 But shall this dusky standard quail  
 In the red slaughter day?  
 Or shall this heart its purpose fail—  
 This arm forget to slay?  
 I trample down such idle doubt;  
 Harald's high blood hath sprung  
 From sires whose hands in martial bout  
 Have ne'er belied their tongue;  
 Nor keener, from their castled rock,  
 Rush eagles on their prey,  
 Than, panting for the battle-shock,  
 Young Harald leads the way."

It is thus that tall Harald, in terrible beauty,  
 Pours forth his big soul to the joyance of heroes.

"Flag! from thy folds, and fiercely wake  
 War-music on the wind,  
 Lest tenderest thoughts should rise to shake  
 The sternness of my mind;  
 Brynhilda, maiden meek and fair,  
 Pale watcher by the sea,  
 I hear thy wailings on the air,  
 Thy heart's dirge sung for me;—  
 In vain thy milk-white hands are wrung  
 Above the salt sea foam;  
 The wave that bears me from thy bower,  
 Shall never bear me home;  
 Brynhilda! seek another love,  
 But ne'er wed one like me,  
 Who death fore-doomed from above  
 Joys in his destiny."

Thus mourn'd the young Harald as he thought of Brynhilda,  
 While his eyes fill'd with tears which glitter'd, but fell not.

"The rivers of yon island low  
 Glance redly in the sun,  
 But ruddier still they're doom'd to glow,  
 And deeper shall they run;

The torrent of proud life shall swell  
 Each river to the brim,  
 And in that spate of blood, how well  
 The headless corpse will swim!  
 The smoke of many a shepherd's cot  
 Curls from each peopled glen;  
 And, hark! the song of maidens mild,  
 The shout of joyous men!  
 But one may hew the oaken tree,  
 The other shape the shroud;  
 As the *Landeyda* o'er the sea  
 Sweeps like a tempest cloud:"—  
 So shouteth fierce Harald—so echo the Northmen,  
 As shoreward the ships like mad steeds are careering.

"Sigurdir's battle-flag is spread  
 Abroad to the blue sky,  
 And spectral visions of the dead,  
 Are trooping grimly by;  
 The spirit-heralds rush before  
 Harald's destroying brand;  
 They hover o'er yon fated shore,  
 And death-devoted band.  
 Marshal, stout Jarls, your battle fast!  
 And fire each beacon height,  
 Our galleys anchor in the sound,  
 Our banner heaves in sight!  
 And through the surge and arrow shower  
 That rains on this broad shield,  
 Harald uplifts the sign of power  
 Which rules the battle-field!"  
 So cries the death-doom'd on the red strand of slaughter  
 While the helmits of heroes like anvils are ringing.

On roll'd the Northmen's war, above  
 The raven standard flew;  
 Nor tide nor tempest ever strove  
 With vengeance half so true.  
 'Tis Harald—'tis the sire-bereaved—  
 Who goads the dread career,  
 And high amid the flashing storm  
 The flag of doom doth rear.  
 "On, on," the tall death-seeker cries,  
 "These earthworms soil our heel;  
 Their spear-points crash like crisping ice,  
 On ribs of stubborn steel!  
 Hurra! hurra! their whirlwinds sweep,  
 And Harald's fate is sped;  
 Bear on the flag—he goes to sleep  
 With the life-scorning dead."  
 Thus fell the young Harald, as of old fell his sires,  
 And the bright hall of heroes bade hail to his spirit.

## LECTURE II

IN my former lecture, I set before you what little is known of the remote origin of the Scandinavians, and at the same time some small portion of the evidence, easily discoverable still, of our having drawn our origin from them. I likewise told you something of the influences under which their character as a race was formed, and more especially of their civil and political institutions, and of their religion or mythology; and though there is no time even to glance again over the ground which we have already traversed so hastily together, it may not be amiss to remind you of that by which you could not but be struck, concerning the manifest general tendency of all the Scandinavian beliefs and laws. Plainly enough, their general tendency was to make each man, whatever else he was, thoroughly energetic, and to develope in each a well-marked individual character. To-night, it is my wish to narrate how this superabundant energy found vent, and how it has influenced the history of the world; and thereafter, to sum up, as best I can, the elements of the strongly-marked character which was thus developed, and to let it speak for itself in some few specimens of the literature of the time. First of all, then, let me give you a hasty outline of the history of the Scandinavians during the centuries when our present nations were being formed. I daresay, in giving the subject of this night's lecture in the advertisement, I should have inserted *the achievements*, as well as *the character and literature*, of our forefathers. But what I have to say under this head may, if you will, be regarded as illustrations of their courage and their vigour, which, after all, were their most notable characteristics. Now, that we may understand the use of which they were made in the carrying out of the purposes of God on earth, we must first of all remember the state of Europe in the eighth and ninth centuries, when, as I have already told you, their incursions first began. It was a state of which it is scarcely possible for us to form any conception. Three centuries before, the Roman Empire of the West had been finally destroyed, after it had been for ages rotting amid weakness and tyranny, corruption, cruelty, and all manner of nameless sins. During these centuries, Europe had been but one wild scene of battle and of blood. The northern invaders by whom Rome was overthrown—known by the various names of Goths, Vandals, Saxons, Franks, and others—were a branch of the great Teutonic family, to which the Scandinavians also belonged; and, when they first precipitated themselves on Southern Europe, were possessed of much of that manly energy and comparatively pure morality which also characterised those of whom I treat. But

long ere this, they had been themselves corrupted and enervated. It seemed as if all the suffering of centuries had been in vain, and as if the victors had now fallen to as low a level as that in which they had found the vanquished. Not that it was really so, for a new and stronger nature had been introduced, which, sunk as it was, was at least capable of a purity and a courage impossible for those whose bodies and whose souls had been alike destroyed by that hereditary debauchery of which we have so dark a picture in the first chapter of the Epistle to the Romans. Yet were the races generally (though some, as, for instance, the English Saxons, retained a little more than others of their former enterprise and freedom)—yet were the races generally, Italian, Gothic, Frankish, or Lombard, all alike rioting in a confusion of pillage and injustice, assassinations and cruelty, and vices which it is polluting to remember, and would be sinful to endeavour to describe. And amid all this the Church itself, the world's only hope, was hardly less corrupt than the world itself. It never, at its lowest, was without some God-inspired heroes of the faith, and humbler souls too, who in their obscurity were as wells of living water to some few equally obscure. It never, at the worst, was without some purifying power—without some healthful restraining influence on the vices and passions of those who owned its sway. But all about it too seemed tending to decay and death. Even as with the Church's Head, so with the Church itself. The corn of wheat had fallen to the ground, and was dying then, and so preparing for that more glorious uprising and bearing of fruit which has been for centuries in progress, but of which it is only the beginning that has been seen as yet. Yes, had it not been for the seeds of an immortal life, of which that Church, polluted and degraded as she was, had not been deprived, all things else would have been in vain. There might have been incursions of races still more powerful and more pure than the Norwegian; there might have been all conceivable impulses and influences on earth; yet, from that weltering chaos, the nations without this could never have emerged. But it is ours to mark for a few minutes now how these human influences were used by God; how the northern nations were brought in, and in some degree brought under the power of the truth, at the very moment when the night was at the darkest, and when, through them, the dawn might be made to appear.

I mentioned last night that, from about 760 to 860, the Scandinavians ravaged the coast of Europe, without making any permanent conquest. This of itself aroused by degrees a more brave and vigorous spirit, and revived in Britain and the continent some measure of the good qualities which the defence of lands and property, wife and children, ever awakes in man. Thus it was the incursions of the Danes, as many of you know already, that aroused in Saxon England all the vitality it possessed during the reign of Alfred. Towards the end of this period, about the middle, that is,

of the eighth century, some small colonies had been formed, besides the still more ancient ones in our neighbourhood here. But it was in the end of the ninth century that the real colonising impulse was given. It came from Norway, which was, after all, the true home and most typical centre of the Scandinavian race. Up till this time, that country had been divided among a host of petty chiefs, each with his own Thing or council, and all of them little more than nominally subject to the King of Norway. In the year 861, this almost titular sovereignty was inherited by HARALD HAARFAJER, or Fair-haired Harald. He was at this time only ten years old; but ere he had arrived at manhood, he had formed the daring project of making himself king in reality as well as name. This design he was incited to, or at least confirmed in, by the answer he received from the maiden whose hand he sought in marriage. She replied that as soon as he was what he professed to be—King of Norway—she would listen to his proposals, but not till then. For thirty long years Harald toiled, and schemed, and fought; and at last, at HAFUR'S FIORD, in one of the bloodiest battles recorded in the history of the north, the power of his enemies was entirely broken. To complete the romance, he was immediately after wedded to GYDE, his early choice, who must ere then have lost something of her youthful charms. Such was the Scandinavian reverence for woman that there is nothing unlikely in this account, almost incredible as it would be in the records of any other heathen nation.\* Most of the defeated chieftains, and their retainers, determined to live no longer in a land which they deemed enslaved. Some set out to join and to extend the colonies already in existence; some to conquer new lands for themselves. And in this they were joined by numbers from Sweden and from Denmark, who had nothing themselves to do with the fair-haired king. Thus the tide of Scandinavian emigration had fairly set in, to continue for generations, long after its immediate cause had passed away. Let me run over the localities where they founded colonies; and though I can do little more than name them, you will see at once how wide-spread their influence became; and if you bear in mind what I have told you of the state of Europe at the time, you will be able (after I have summed up for you the elements of the Scandinavian character) to

\* On looking the other day, however, over a book in which Scandinavian chronology is well laid down, I found the date assigned to the battle of Hafur's Fiord to be 876, or only fifteen years after Harald succeeded to the crown. This, of course, is quite irreconcilable with the account given above. Where the mistake lies, I cannot tell. It may spring from a misprint in the book alluded to; it may be from my having, through forgetfulness, ascribed to Harald a story relating to some other king; but most probably there are different legends and chronologies adopted in the different Sagas. It is not until Norway had become consolidated under the rule of this powerful monarch, that the dates of most of its historical events can be ascertained with perfect certainty. I have no time for examining fully into the causes of the discrepancy; and I must remind the reader of the warning already given of my not professing accurately to remember, in every case, dates and other particulars of the kind. Though I should be much surprised at any downright error being found in any of my statements, I would much prefer that they should not be taken for granted, but that each should search into them for himself; and I am confident that many at least who might begin to read on the subject, only to ascertain the precise truth concerning some transaction in which they are interested, would speedily learn to pursue the study for its own sake.



guess at what I have no time definitely to dwell on—viz, the beneficial and enduring nature of the influence they exercised.

One of the first results of the battle of Hafur's Fiord was the settlement of ICELAND. This island was discovered by one NADDOD, in the year 861—the very year in which Harald Haarfager succeeded to the throne. A few years after, one GARDAR, a Swede, on his way to the Hebrides, was overtaken by so terrible a storm in the Pentland Firth that he too was driven as far as Iceland. The mariner's compass, you must remember, was then unknown; so that his course, once lost, was not easily recovered. In 870, the island was minutely explored by FLOKI; and thus it became known to the Norwegians at the very time when a new land was needed. Soon after the year 900, the most of the island had been taken possession of; and a regular government, with a Thing and all other Norwegian institutions, had been established. The Faroe Islands had been discovered and colonised some generations before, and formed a convenient stage in the passage from the mother country. In this northern sanctuary these expatriated Norsemen, finding themselves too far from Europe to conduct their wonted piracies, turned their energies into a healthier and more ennobling channel. During the centuries known as the dark ages, Iceland was the most learned and literary country in the western world. It was the birth-place of most of the Scandinavian literature; and its sons were scattered over all northern Europe as poets, and as secretaries or ambassadors of kings—in short, in every kind of post in which intellectual ability was required. I wish I had time to tell you of the laws and manners of the Icelanders; and how, to this day—though struggling with difficulties, in the face of which it might seem enough if they preserved their bare existence—they are educated, refined, and kindly, beyond any other people.\* I wish I had time to trace out the causes by which a literary taste was developed among them; and a retreat thus prepared for knowledge, banished by the din of arms from Europe, whence it was again to issue mightily purified and invigorated by its northern sojourn. These things, those who will read some of the volumes, whose names are before you, will find it full of interest and profit to reflect on.†

But it was not only in literature that the Icelanders displayed their hereditary energy. They had not been long settled in their new country ere they discovered and colonised GREENLAND also;‡

\* I do not wish to convey the impression, that among the Icelanders are to be found the foremost men of the age in literature or science. What I mean is, that, *as a people*, they rank in these respects as the first in Europe. A high standard of education seems to be universal, and the greatest taste for reading of a right and healthy kind is everywhere diffused. Learning is common to all; not as with us, carried to a high pitch with the few, and wholly wanting in the many. And even with respect to men of distinguished reputation, no country has, in recent times, produced so many in proportion to its population. In Britain indeed their writings are not much known, simply because they treat of history and cognate subjects for which no taste has existed here for centuries, though now at last it is beginning faintly to appear.

† See Appendix.

‡ All have been struck by the seeming absurdity of that region of ice and snow being named the *green land*; but the truth is, that during the brief Arctic summer (at which time

the climate of which can hardly, at that time, have been so severe as now. For in valleys whence life, animal and vegetable, is almost wholly banished by perpetual ice and snow, the ruins of extensive villages and churches may still be seen.

It would merit, did time permit, more than this passing notice, that in their voyages to Greenland the Icelanders discovered America, and explored the coast, at least as far south as the site of the city of New York. Many voyages were made to it; and, a colony founded, which, however, does not appear to have been at any time very prosperous; and, though down to the 14th century communication was occasionally kept up, VINLAND, as they named America, does not figure very prominently in the history of the Norsemen. Still it is as certain as any fact in history, that more than 400 years before the birth of Columbus, they knew, and thought little of making voyages to the land which the tried mariners of Spain with such difficulty managed to arrive at.

Such voyages as these, at that early time, indicate that they were far before every other European people, not only in courage, but in skill and civilisation of every kind. And when we remember this wandering, restless instinct of theirs, and contrast it with the comparatively stay-at-home disposition of pure Saxons, like the Germans, we shall not, I think, be at any loss to determine to which of the races that have gone to form the British nation we owe the vast colonial empire on which the sun never sets.

About the time when Iceland was settled by Norwegians, the empire of Russia was founded by RURIK, or RODERICK, the Swede. With a number of his countrymen, he subdued the barbarian tribes, which have since expanded into this colossal nation. The house of Romanoff, which to this day reigns in Russia, are his lineal descendants; and no one who knows their history—who remembers Peter the Great, and Catherine, and Alexander, and Nicholas, can doubt their being possessed of much of the valour, energy, and genius, as well as of some portion of the ferocity and love of diplomatic stratagem which characterised their ancestors.\*

Soon after this time, the Scandinavians found their way south through eastern Europe, to the coast of the Black Sea, and thence to Constantinople, which was then, and until it was taken by the Turks in 1453, the capital of the eastern Roman, or as it is more commonly termed the Grecian Empire.† There they entered into the service of the emperor, and for generations formed his body guard—the centre and flower of his army, and a most influential

of the year it was first discovered), its valleys are covered with grass of greater richness than that of Iceland; and this would of course appear all the greener, from its contrast to the snow-clad hills which rise directly above the valleys on the coast.

\* The direct male descendants of Roderick became extinct in 1598. After a period of fearful anarchy, the Romanoffs—descended from the former dynasty in the female line—partly by popular election, partly by the right of the strongest, succeeded to the vacant throne. Thus they represent the family of Roderick exactly as Robert Bruce did that of the ancient Scottish kings.

† Constantinople was known in Scandinavia by the name of "Micklegard," or Big Town.

power at all times in his government. They were known by the name of the VARANGIANS.\*

I must pass over other colonies in Germany and France in order to tell you of one of the most important of them all, of which the latter country was the seat. The coasts of France had been often wasted; Paris itself, at least once taken; and some small colonies already established, when ROLLO first invaded it. The expedition was one in which we may feel a special interest. Rollo (the softened French form of his real name, HROLF or RALPH,) was a younger son of the earl of Orkney and Caithness; and most probably left this country (though of this I am not quite sure) in consequence of his father, and all the smaller chieftains of Shetland, Orkney, and Caithness, being forced to own the sway of the redoubtable Harald Haarfager. It was at any rate about this time that, collecting a band, who would of course be mainly composed of the subjects of his father's earldom, he landed in France, and wrested from its king entire possession of the large and fertile province which has since then been named Normandy—the land, that is, of the Normans, Northmen, or Norwegians.† There Rollo and his descendants, with the title of dukes, were really kings; and those who had been but petty chiefs, or perhaps but small farmers or fishermen in their own country here, found themselves, as in a moment, powerful lords ruling over thousands of Frenchmen.

Though heathens when they invaded France, the Normans soon embraced Christianity; and became a polished, courtly, and (compared with the general state of matters at the time) a humane and literary nation. Indeed, wherever the Scandinavians went, they generally learned from their vassals all they had that was valuable, and always their Christianity, or at least their Christian form of worship and professed belief. The Normans were the foremost and most chivalrous knights, the most skilful leaders, the most eloquent orators, and the most accomplished, or rather it may be plainly termed, the most cunning politicians of their age. And I need not surely remind you how, 150 years after Rollo's invasion, they most

\* I have no certain knowledge of how they came to receive this appellation, but the conjecture may be ventured that it is derived from the name of a district in the extreme north of Norway—a name which still survives in the VARANGER FJORD. Perhaps the first Northmen who arrived at "Micklegaard" may have belonged to that remote region. King HARALD HAMBRADE, who fell in battle with Harald Goodwin's son, shortly before the battle of Hastings, was long the captain of the Varangian guard; and, to this day, his name may be read, carved in Runic characters in the Acropolis of Athens.

† It is rather a pity that the word "Norwegian" has become naturalised among us. It is unknown in Norway itself. Its inhabitants call themselves to this day, Normans (*i.e.* Nordmans or Northmen), exactly as did the followers of William the Conqueror. Norway is simply our softened form of "Nord œ," the north land or island; and the proper adjective from it is that used by Milton, "Norwegian." This has changed into "Norwegian;" and the word thus formed has been applied to the inhabitants of Norway by the same mode of speech which makes us speak of the *Spaniards* instead of the *Spaniards*, and the *Scots* instead of the *Scots*. It might indeed be pedantry to insist upon a change, but it is well that we should at least remember that the rightful term is, "the Normans"—not "the Norwegians."

I may add that the œ in "Nord œ" is the same termination that is familiar to us in the north, in such words as GRIMSAY, RONALDSHAY, and ORKNEY; and the same too that appears in such as STROMA, anciently STROMAY (*i.e.* *Strom œ*, or the island of the stream); which any one who knows the Pentland will deem an appropriate name.

thoroughly subdued England; under his descendant William the Conqueror—through whom it is that our Sovereign draws her title to the English Crown.\* The followers of William became of course the aristocracy of England; and many of them, penetrating also into Scotland, were the founders of our noblest families. Amongst others was the family of SINCLAIR, who, in the 15th century, by marriage with the heiress of the Norwegian earls, succeeded to their lands in Orkney and in Caithness; the family thus returning, after a circuit through Normandy, England, and the Lowlands, to the county whence, doubtless, their ancestors had set out 500 years before. So you see it is on account of her descent from Rollo, a scion of that race of earls who had one of their principal residences at Ormlie,† that Queen Victoria rules in London; and there are many hundreds of people in this county, and in Orkney, who could, without much trouble, make out pretty accurately the degree in which they stand related to Her Majesty. Thus have these northern shires of ours, through those whom they sent out of old, had a most potent influence on the history of the world.

There is one other of the Norman conquests to which I must allude. They expelled the Saracens from Sicily, and for a long time ruled over it and the south of Italy, under the title of the Counts of Naples. There is a most characteristic story of their once quarrelling with the Pope (no light matter then), and actually appearing in arms against him—a piece of sacrilege, showing how little hold the superstitions of the time had on the northern mind. The Pope assembled and himself accompanied a large army. With greatly inferior numbers, but with great ease, the Normans defeated them, and pursued and took captive His Holiness. Seemingly content with having thoroughly beaten him, they begged his pardon; and, as it were in sport, let him have almost everything the poor man had been fighting for.

These Counts quarrelled once with the Emperor of Constantinople; and, having several times defeated him, determined upon conquering his entire dominions. In a terrible engagement they were however defeated by their own countrymen, the Varangians, who had been sent forth in this last extremity; and, but for whom, COUNT ROBERT GUISCARD would most assuredly have mounted the throne of the Cæsars. Thus had the Scandinavians girdled Europe. Coming, one party from the east, the other from the west, and influencing more or less every nation on the way, they had met on the plains of Greece—a place at a greater distance then to all intents and purposes, from their original seats, than any that the earth contains is to us in the nineteenth century.

But our own Islands were, after all, the chief scene of Scandina-

\* To the English crown—not of course to that of Scotland, which she inherits from that unconquered line of kings, whom our fervent patriots insist on tracing back to FERGUS, B.C. 300! Robert Bruce, however, the great restorer of the Scottish monarchy, was as pure a Norman as the Conqueror.

† The epitaph of the famous castle of Ormlie is written in the name of the house now standing almost on its site—"Castle Green."

vian colonisation; and it is we, the English and the Scots, through whom chiefly their influence is now felt. I casually told you last night something of their connection with Ireland. For some hundred years they presented the same spectacle there as Britain does in India now—that of a small number of a powerful race, virtually, though not always directly, ruling over a population some scores of times their number. But their influence in England and Scotland was greater far. And here I must insert a word of explanation. All that I have said as yet, concerning Scandinavian influence, is well known and universally admitted. What I have still to say, though equally true, is not so generally believed. It has become the fashion to talk of our race as the “Anglo-Saxon,” and to speak as if the institutions and the character of those who speak the English tongue were of purely Saxon origin. Thus, what is now said of the Scandinavians, may appear to many of you strange and novel. I cannot of course, in these few minutes, adduce authorities and proofs for my statements; but you will I think believe me, when I say that I shall state nothing of the accuracy of which some considerable investigation has not thoroughly convinced myself—nothing, I may add, which is not in accordance with the opinion, not yet of the general run of writers, but of those who are best entitled to speak with authority on the point.

It was the Danish branch of the Scandinavians that had most to do with England. They overran the whole country in the time of Alfred, and, though defeated by him, retained possession of Northumberland, Durham, and part of Yorkshire. From these they gradually extended their conquests, until the whole of the eastern coast of the country was in their hands. At length, under SWEYN, they became masters of the whole, and held the crown for some generations. Sweyn’s son, CANUTE THE GREAT, was by far the most powerful monarch of his time, being king at once of England, Norway, and Denmark. When the two peoples, the Saxons and the Danes, were at peace, a line, called the WATLINGA-STROET, was drawn through the centre of London, dividing England into two not very unequal parts, of which the eastern was governed by the Danish laws, and the western by the Saxon. The course which this line took through London itself is to this day known by its ancient name of Watling Street. Of course the inhabitants of the eastern half were not purely Scandinavian; yet were the Scandinavians the ruling power, and the chief formative cause of the character of the population. Besides this, there were detached colonies, chiefly of Norwegians, in the western portion of the country, as in Devon and in Cumberland; and in the latter especially, they seem to have nearly expelled the earlier possessors. Of this, a small but well marked token occurred not long ago to myself. In visiting in a neglected part of Edinburgh, I came upon a woman whom, as soon as she began to speak, I set down as from Caithness. After some conversation, I said, “I think you come from the north;” and so

she did; but it was from the north of England, not of Scotland—from Cumberland. Yet I never met a more perfect specimen, as I thought, of the Caithness face and accent, and I flatter myself I have a pretty good eye and ear for these things. Thus have the Scandinavian peculiarities of appearance, dialect, and manner, endured through these many generations alike in Cumberland and Caithness. Thus except South Wales which is purely Celtic, and the midland counties which are purely Saxon, there is scarcely any part of the southern kingdom in which there is not a Scandinavian admixture of the population, which if not always numerous, was always most influential in fixing their character and language.\* In Scotland, the case is similar. The Border counties were Scandinavian colonies; the genius of the people in their rude and lawless times amply exemplifies this, and the names of the places to this day corroborate it. Thus that is emphatically the country of the *dales*; as for example, ESKDALE, TWEEDDALE, ANNANDALE, NITHSDALE, TEVIOTDALE, LIDDESDALE. So too AYR, certainly the most typical of all the Lowland Scottish counties, was largely colonised from Norway. The name itself of the town and county are pure Norwegian:—EIR, an open beach or sandy coast; a name sufficiently descriptive of the locality, and the same by the way, which we have in the north in EIRIBOLL, the boll or farm of the sandy beach. In the Lothians and Lanark, the Norwegian element is smaller than on the Borders, though very considerable still, and northwards through Fife and Forfar, it gradually decreases, until in Aberdeen and Banff it is not very appreciable at all. I incline to think that the population in these last shires, are the remains of that race of whom so little can be discovered—the Picts. Yet in all these counties, the leading families are Norman as distinguished from *directly* Scandinavian; and on all their coasts there are besides purely Norwegian colonies, preserving to this day, most markedly, their ancient customs and appearance, and chiefly engaged in a sea-faring life. There are such, for instance at BUCKHAVEN in Fife, JOHNSHAVEN and STONEHAVEN in Kincardine, and BUCKIE in Banff.

In the Highlands again, the Scandinavians appear after a different fashion. While the country of the Saxon had to be colonised, he, if fairly beaten, seeking another settlement, determined not to remain as serf where he had been lord—that of the Celt had only to be conquered. As in Ireland so in the Highlands, the native inhabitants were content to receive their invaders as their rulers. Thus, these gathered around them the former possessors of the soil; and in time adopted their customs, dress, and language; so that the republican Viking became in time the chieftain of a clan, wearing the tartan and speaking Gaelic. Thus the powerful family of the

\* This alleged influence of the Scandinavian on the English tongue, may be tested by one who will compare any ordinary specimen of English with the corresponding passages in German and Icelandic. Let the Lord's prayer, for instance, or some simple verses of Scripture, be thus compared; and the most inveterate supporter of the "Anglo-Saxon" theory, cannot but see that English is as much Scandinavian as Saxon in its origin.

Lords of the Isles\* were of pure Norwegian descent. So also were the chieftains of almost all the principal clans besides; such as that of CAMPBELL, SUTHERLAND, M'INTOSH, SINCLAIR, M'NEIL, GUNN, FRASER, CAMERON, and M'KAY. There are, however, a few clans such as the M'GREGORS whose chiefs were of Celtic descent. Sometimes the Gaelic Mac was prefixed to the name of the conquering chief, and the patronymic of the whole clan thus formed; as, for instance, in M'LEOD and M'IVER: Liot and Ivar being simply Norwegian. Thus is explained the anomaly which puzzled the Lowlanders in the rebellion of 1745; that the Highland chiefs should seem so different from their followers, being tall, athletic, and fair-haired, while the latter were short of stature and of dark complexion. No little portion of the good qualities of the Highlanders, and doubtless of the evil too, is to be ascribed to their being thus so largely intermixed with, and governed by, the northern race. Wherever you find flat and fertile land near the sea coast in the Highlands, you may be pretty sure of finding traces of the Norsemen. I put this to the test not long ago. In company with a friend whose sympathies were rather Celtic, I was visiting for the first time, a part of the west coast, which is open and fertile, not unlike some of the best parts of Caithness. I said, "This is far too good land for my friends not to have turned the Celts out of it; I am sure there are tokens of them being here." I had some fears, both because the locality is small, not much larger than Holborn Head, and because it is somewhat south of the river Laxford, which, according to an excellent authority, is the southern limit of Norse names for more than a hundred miles. But the very next place of which we asked the name, had the unmistakeable termination *gio*, and we speedily fell in with others as markedly Scandinavian.† Thus you see how largely the Scandinavians were

\* There is an almost amusing attempt to deny this in the introduction to the very valuable "BOOK OF THE DEAN OF LISMORE," recently published by Messrs Edmonston and Douglas, Edinburgh. The writer of the introduction, Mr Skene, one of the few in this country who have been laying the foundations of Ethnology, admits that SOMERLED, the founder of the family, bore a Scandinavian name, and that he came into possession of the Islands only by marriage with the heiress of the Norwegian Jarls. Nor does he conceal that hitherto all who have turned their attention to the matter, have regarded the family as purely Scandinavian. Yet he insists that the Lords of the Isles were Celtic; the only proof being that they fought against some of the Scandinavians and had some Celtic allies. As if at that time Celts and Scandinavians alike did not fight among themselves as often as with foes of a different race. Seemingly aware of the weakness of the proof, whenever the Lords of the Isles are afterwards mentioned in the Introduction, it is as "this Celtic house," "this Celtic family," and so on. If they had been shown to be Celts, it would not have been necessary to reassert it so continually.

The contents of the book itself suffice to show that the Celts have enough of character and achievement of their own, without trying, as they have long been doing, to appropriate to themselves what belongs to others. It is time surely, that these prejudices of race had ceased to interfere with our inquiries into historical truth;—all the more when we remember that there is scarcely a literary man in Scotland who must not have Scandinavians, Saxons, and Celts, all of them among his ancestors. When the truth is dispassionately sought after, it will soon appear that each race had its own share to contribute, and each its own peculiar place to fill—all of them honourable, all of them indispensable for making our nation what it is.

† Thus it is a mistake for the Highlanders to boast of their pure Celtic blood, or for those who dislike them to call them Celts, as if that were the most reproachful term they could fall in with. Both of these mistakes are common enough. But in point of fact, the character of the people in most of the Highlands is as much Scandinavian as Celtic. The number even of Norwegians who settled there was very large, since not only must there have been a considerable body at the first conquest of a district, but for generations their numbers

settled in Britain, and to what an extent our national character must therefore depend on them. Our language is an evidence to the same effect. It is loosely said to be of Saxon origin, but the Scandinavian element in the English tongue, is at least as great as the Saxon; and so close is the affinity of Norwegian to our provincial dialects (which, of course, show best the original fountain-head of a people's speech) that I have it on the authority of one who has resided many years in Norway, that even now, though the language has changed with them, as well as with us—that even now, one able to speak good Ayrshire Scotch can, after a fashion, make himself understood there. Of course, one who could speak the real Caithness, and all the more if with the peculiarities of Canisbay, would get on far better.

Now, before going on to sum up and set forth the character of those of whose achievements I have said so much, it strikes me that a single word of caution may not be out of place. In skimming thus over the history of a warlike time, some minds, at least, are apt to be taken up only with its glitter and romance. And it is, perhaps, not wrong that in describing, and in hearing it described, there should be some sympathy with this romantic element. Yet let us not forget that under all this there lay suffering the most terrible, cruelty and bloodshed, treachery and rapine, which seemed but little to the men of that day, but the very thought of which would be soul-harrowing in ours. With all its evils, this is an age unspeakably in advance of that. Yet without that, what we enjoy could not have been arrived at; even as it is on the foundation of the age in which we live, that the time will come when our cruelties, and lies, and treacheries (would that our eyes were opened to see them now) will be banished from the earth. For thus, age after age, slowly and with many an apparent check, yet ever surely, is that promise being fulfilled that the world shall be brought back to peace, and purity, and love, through the ever-working Spirit of Him who has come and died to save it.

Now, then, for a few words on the Scandinavian character; they were increased by new retainers flocking to the banner of the successful invader. Moreover, there are few tracts of the Highland coast where detached colonies of Norwegians did not settle. The people, for instance, of DURNESS, are almost as purely Scandinavians as those of Thurso; though being surrounded by Celts on all sides, they have come to use the Gaelic language. The case is similar all along the east coast of Sutherland, from Helmsdale southwards. Indeed, in most parts of the coast of the north Highlands, you find a strip of land some few miles broad, inhabited by Scandinavians, who, in character and appearance, are to this day easily distinguishable from the people of the interior.

Besides, the position of leadership which these colonists occupied, even more than their actual numbers, has modified the Highland character.

It is to the relation thus subsisting between the two races that I would ascribe much of the genealogical turn characteristic of the Highlands; or at least much of the desire on the part of all to show some blood-connection with the chief. It arose from the wish to make out that one belonged to the conquering and not to the conquered race.

I conclude this note by quoting a few words from Dr Gustaf Kombet; perhaps the best authority we have on general ethnography. "The higher classes of the inhabitants in the Highlands have either the marks of pure Teutonic origin—viz., large, tall figure, blue eyes, and fair or reddish hair; or they bear at least the marks of a cross breed, in which the Teutonic prevails in the frame of body, and often, also, in the occurrence of bluish or grey eyes, though the hair and complexion may be dark. Also among the lower classes, a great many individuals of pure Teutonic character occur, the majority being, undoubtedly, a cross breed in which on the whole, the Teutonic character prevails."



must be fewer far than I could wish; and I must leave you to judge, without my dwelling on it, how far that character is exemplified in ourselves. Of course, all estimates of character are but comparative; therefore, let us simply contrast the Scandinavian with that of the other two great races which have gone to form the British peoples—the Celtic and the Saxon. First of all, then, we have the restless energy of the Scandinavian, of which I have spoken so often. He cannot be idle; it is not in his nature. The Celt will dream, if you let him, for any length of time; the Saxon will sleep; the Scandinavian must work. If he has not work, he will make it. If he cannot be doing good, he will be doing evil. And this comes out in the very vices characteristic of the races. That of the Scandinavians is drinking, by which a kind—a short-lived and a sinful kind, yet a kind—of energy is induced. The favourite one of the Saxon is gluttony, by which he enjoys a sleepy torpor and repose. The Scandinavian drinks spirits, by which he is excited; the Saxon beer, by which he is bemuddled.

Connected with this energy is a noble dissatisfaction, a craving after something better than has been gained as yet—a feeling which, at bottom, is a dim, wild, unconscious yearning after something worthier than can be got on earth at all. Yet, from these two things arises one of the greatest evils in the Scandinavian's character—fickleness, and excessive love of change. Once get up his interest in anything, and he is determined on it, and no obstacle daunts him in the least until what he wants seems on the way to being attained. Then some new object carries him away, and the old is cast aside; he cannot wait; the only hope of his ever fairly and fully working out anything at all, is its being of such a kind as to demand incessant effort, or his having so many things on hand at once that he can work at the one when he should be waiting for the other. If he has to relax his efforts he is, for a wonder, off with the thing entirely. Yet has the Scandinavian none of the fiery impulsiveness of the Celt. He works coolly and quietly, doing three times as much as the Celt with a third of his show; but he must be ever on the stretch. Whatever we have in our national character of steady, untiring patience, perseverance, and endurance, is traceable to a Saxon origin.

Next, let me notice the independence, thorough sturdy independence, of the Scandinavian. With him there is none of the cringing servility of the Celt; rather is he in danger of refusing just and rightful reverence. He is impatient of everything that has not a footing of its own to stand on—of everything that even appears to be unreal. While a Celt reverences a man because he is in some official position—his hereditary chief, his clergyman, his master—the Norseman reverences only the man himself, and if he feels the man to be unworthy of his place, that place will then only add to the contempt with which he is regarded. Again, the Scandinavian nature is more frank, and free, and trusting, than the Saxon, and far more so than the

suspicious Celtic. It is, for instance, a sort of unwritten maxim of British, that is, of Scandinavian law (for, in its spirit, it is far more Scandinavian than Saxon), that an accused man be deemed innocent till proved guilty. It is one of French, that is, of Celtic law, that such a one be deemed guilty till proved innocent.

I would not say that the character of the Scandinavian is nearly so affectionate as the Celtic; and yet, when he is brought to feel that a man is worthy of confidence and affection, his friendship (or his friendly obedience, if the man be his leader or his master) is far truer, steadier, and more enduring, than that of either Celt or Saxon. In the old churchyard of Durness, there is a quaint inscription which runs thus—

“Donald M'Murrough here lies low;  
Ill to his friend, waur to his foe,  
True to his master in weird and woe.”

There spoke the genuine Celtic rascal. Ready to betray friend as well as foe; his one redeeming point being fidelity to his master; that is, to his hereditary chief. The Northman, again, be he as thorough a rascal as he might, while as true as the other, not to an hereditary chief, but to one whom he deemed worthy to be his chief; and while at least as cruel as the other to his enemy, would yet have been true—true through blood and fire, true even to the death—to the man he once called friend.\* Truth, reality, friendship, honour—these were the Northman's aspirations. And yet I cannot, I am sorry to say, fully call them truthful. There was and is a carelessness about truth which is one of the greatest, indeed most painful, inconsistencies I have met with in any ethnological investigation. Once get them interested in a thing—once get them to *feel* it as a point of honour or duty, and to the last drop of their blood they may be trusted. Yet in ordinary life there is a carelessness about promises, a forgetfulness of engagements, unexemplified in either Celt or Saxon. There are a few here who, from having heard me talk in this way before, will be in danger of supposing that I am in this just taking occasion to hint at certain defects noticeable in Thurso, without much ground for calling it a peculiarly Scandinavian failing. But it is not so. In all the ancient history of the race—in all that I have read and heard of modern Sweden, Denmark, Norway, Iceland, and other places not separated from us by very many miles of sea, this sad feature of untruthfulness is exceedingly prominent. On the one hand, it is certain that if the Norseman be somewhat roused, if his attention be fairly alive to the importance of a thing, or to his duty in it, there is in him a devotedness to truth, a longing and a craving for it, a carrying

\* I see that I have not put this trait of longing for sympathy, and fidelity in friendship, nearly strong enough above. Coarse as the whole Scandinavian nature undoubtedly is in comparison with the delicate refinement of the Celtic, there was in it, and there is in it still, a depth of love too deep to be at once perceptible—ever craving to express itself—ever seeking some one in whom it may *fully* trust, and from whom a response is sure to all the inmost and truest thoughts and feelings. Even in the old heathen times a man was deemed happy, not so much on account of his power, his wealth, his birth, as in proportion to the number and the faithfulness of his friends. The highest honour the Saga-men could ascribe to any of their heroes was that he was one to whom his friends stuck closely.

of it out at any cost, a determination to be honest and to be real, which no other race on earth exemplifies. But on the other hand, it is equally certain that, when not so roused, he is untruthful, and seemingly without any sense of the need of being truthful; and that in the very last degree. I cannot fully reconcile or understand the painful inconsistency.

The Norseman was not easily excited to passion or revenge. He knew nothing of the bitter Celtic longing for blood to wash out an injury.\* Yet there was in him a demon of ferocity which, when once awake, was terrible beyond anything seen among any other people. Yes, and overlaid as it is by centuries of Christian influence, that demon is in us still, wholly ineradicable, save by thorough conversion to God. In Scandinavian districts, murder, for example, is far less frequent than in Celtic; but when murders do occur, they are accompanied by the most heart-sickening brutality. Such a tiger ferocity it was that made our forefathers *boil* their bishop, and impelled George the Wicked, Earl of Caithness, to starve his son to death in Girnigio, while he himself was feasting overhead.

Add to all this, that there was in the Scandinavian character a wonderful power of adapting itself to every change of circumstance or locality, a peculiarly strong feeling of family affection, a vein of sad tenderness, and a singular generosity, shown especially in the treatment of the weaker sex: and I have said all that I can mention now. Of this last, any one may have abundant proof, who will but compare the state of women in the lowlands of Caithness with that in which they are in some Highland districts not very far away. There, to this day, the women for the most part do all the menial drudgery about the house and about the land, while their husbands are basking in the sunshine, or sleeping by the fire.

The Saxon and the Celt have done much for our national character. They are, indeed, its basis. Yet still more, in my belief, has been done by that freer, stronger race which united and governed them; which has bequeathed to us our energy, our adaptability, our love of freedom and of justice; and which has thus led the nation on to greatness, and to the accomplishment of that good which God has privileged us to work on earth already, and which, if we are

\* It is true that the Sagas are full—like all records of heathen peoples—of deeds of blood. But these were perpetrated, not as they would be among Celts from an insatiable feeling of thirst for vengeance, but simply because, until Christianity was adopted, and indeed until long after, it was universally held to be the duty of every man to avenge the death of a friend or relative by slaying his murderer. Thus murders were perpetuated; one often giving rise to many. But that this was done simply from a mistaken sense of duty, is plain from the ease with which reconciliations were generally made on the guilty party being punished by fine or temporary banishment, all that was sought being justice. It is plain, also, from the faithfulness with which these reconciliations were always kept; and, most of all, from the fair and open way in which revenge was sought. Whilst a Celt would stab his enemy in the dark, the Scandinavian never took him unawares, or refused to peril his life in open combat with him.

In this, as in all things, the Northman acted, because, on cool deliberation, he deemed it (however mistakenly) his duty. The Celt in his revenge was actuated by a torrent of ungovernable passion. Dr Dasent (than whom no one is better acquainted with the ancient Scandinavians) sets down as the motto of one of the books mentioned in the appendix, and of course as expressive of the character of the men it treats of, these two Icelandic proverbs:—"But a short while is hand fain of blow;" and, "Bare is back without brother behind it." The latter bears out what I spoke of in the last note.

faithful to our trust, will but presage good, wider and deeper far. Possibly I may seem to have dealt rather harshly with the Celt in these last remarks. Let me add, therefore now, that to him is due, in spite of these weaknesses, much of whatever devotedness we have to a person, a family, an idea; much of our loyalty and patriotism; and finally, nearly all that we possess of that deep-souled and pensive melancholy which, from the days of Ossian,\* has been descending from these old grey hills, to give a sadder earnestness to our thoughts on the life we are living now, and to turn these thoughts often to the life that lies beyond it. There is in the Celt an openness to religious impressions and a power of dwelling on religious thoughts, when once they have found a real entrance, for which you will seek in vain in Scandinavian or Saxon; and of this we need not go far to find a token. For while Scandinavian energy and love of justice, Scandinavian skill and honesty, and even a little of Scandinavian cleanliness, have penetrated into and changed the Gaelic parts of the county, it is the Celtic type of religious custom and feeling that prevails throughout it all. I do not say that this is altogether an advantage; but it is a noticeable fact, that, in this so important point, the conquered should have overcome the conquerors.†

A few words now on the physical appearance of the Scandinavians, in which those of you who believe as much as I do in the power given to the mind to mould the body, will see what I have said on their character visibly shadowed forth. I think it is Scott that describes them thus. They are known, he says—

“By the tall form, blue eye, proportion fair;  
The limbs athletic, and the long light hair.”

With respect to the last particular, I used to be puzzled; but a better acquaintance with colours has shewn me its accuracy. Those of Scandinavian descent have often, very often, dark hair; but it is always such that only the *shade*, not the colour, would require to be changed, to make it even flaxen. It is never black. It may be the very darkest brown. Wherever you find the population of a district to be characterised by black hair, that population is certainly well nigh purely Celtic.§ To the above lines I would only add, that the

\* For a most full and impartial statement what seems to be the truth concerning this vexed question about Ossian, see Mr Skene's Introduction to the volume already mentioned — “The Book of the Dean of Lismore.”

† Of course the fact simply is, that in describing any race, one fixes on their good qualities chiefly; and it happens that the Scandinavians and Celts are so opposite in their characteristics, that in almost everything wherein the one excels the other is deficient. If I were describing the Celts I would in like manner seem to be depreciating the Teutonic race. I know the Celtic country—and such remnants of the Celtic race as the mixture of cruxy and folly, mis-called improvement, has suffered to remain among us—too well to be willing, in however small a measure, to raise any prejudice against those who are capable of so much gallantry, poetry, affection, and devotion.

§ I quote again from Dr Gustaf Kambst. In speaking of the fair complexion of the Teutons and the dark one of the Celts he says: “In crossing the two shades, the darker one prevails over the fairer in complexion, colour of eyes and hair; the fairer again predominates over the darker one so far as frame of body, and frequently so far as temperament is concerned.” This explains the darkness of the hair in districts where other physical characteristics and the whole mental disposition are manifestly Teutonic. Yet I believe, that seldom, if ever, does the hair become black, as I have said above.

face is broad and open, caused by the height of the cheek-bones; the forehead more remarkable for breadth than height; and the complexion fair, and often ruddy—never dark and sallow, like the Celtic. But perhaps the most notable feature in their physiognomy is what I would term the *mobility* of the countenance. The Celtic character flashes out from the dark and deep-set eye, while the light-blue or grey eye of the Scandinavian is comparatively inexpressive. But this is compensated by the exceeding expressiveness of the mouth and chin. The whole lower part of the face has often, indeed, the appearance as if its very bones were flexible—so easily can the observant and practised eye read in it the signs of each thought or emotion as it passes through the mind.

I must now, as the last head of these lectures, tell you something of the literature of Scandinavia. I see, however, that my remarks on this subject must be greatly curtailed from what I had intended. Even before writing, along with Christianity, was introduced into Scandinavia, about the year 1000, the literature was extensive. It was preserved in the memories of the people, and handed down from generation to generation. At that time, of course, it consisted almost solely of poetry. But after the art of writing became known, prose works, and especially histories, or, as they were termed *Sagas*, began to be composed. Of these there are very many; and in an age when, in the rest of Europe, the few who could write at all did no more than compile a dry chronicle of events, many of Iceland's sons were publishing volumes bearing on intricate questions in jurisprudence, and writing full and beautifully composed histories, which are to this day about the most interesting and vivid that it is possible to peruse. Of these, I must say nothing; and I shall confine myself to one or two specimens of their poetry, selecting it from the heathen period, that you may see the rude and fierce materials out of which we have been formed. Among the chief poems is the celebrated *LODBROKARKYDA*, or *Death Song of Regner Lodbrok*—a poem at least 900 years old. Regner Lodbrok—that is, Regner *Roughbreeks*—was a king of Denmark in the eighth century. After many successful piratical expeditions, he was captured by Ella, King of Northumberland, and thrown into a dungeon full of venomous serpents, from whose bite he soon expired. By whomsoever the song was composed, it is represented as sung by him when the poison was working in his veins, and is certainly very like what a Viking in his circumstances would say. Some good judges think it quite possible that it, or part of it, may have been actually composed by him. On this, I am, of course, no authority; but it can certainly be traced back at least to within a century of the time of his death. The poem consists of twenty-nine stanzas of ten lines each, and is simply a *fiere*, exulting narrative of his life, glorying in his bloody victories, but not concealing his defeats. A few verses will serve as a specimen, from a translation which is almost literally exact:—

We have hew'd with our swords, hurrah !

High was each hero's crest

When Hedinga's bay heard the roar of war :

Thunder'd the lance on each mail-clad breast,

You might hear the clang afar,

As right through the cuirass it eagerly prest.

Sweet was the sight for a warrior tried ;

Not more I rejoic'd when in love's first pride,

I clasp'd to my bosom my beauteous bride.

We have hew'd with our swords, hurrah !

Fierce was the storm of war

That burst on the shields of my followers true

When the brilliant light of Northumberland's star

Was quenched in death's red dew.

Not till the morn had our foes fled afar ;

But loud on their helmets our swords then rung—

Many a chief to the earth we flung :

No mother or widow their death-song sung.

We have hew'd with our swords, hurrah !

On many a slaughter'd heap

Of their bravest foes did our warriors lie ;

The crows swept gladly along the deep,

For the clamour of battle rose high,

When Erin's king slept his last long sleep.

In the midst of the combat's most furious swell,

At Vedra's Gulf, King Mariston fell—

The wolf and the raven his fate can tell.

We have hew'd with our swords, hurrah !

Many a warrior lay

On the bloody field on that fatal morn ;

And my Regner fell in the front of the fray,

And left this heart forlorn :

It was Egil alone that my boy could slay.

But wild did the roar of the conflict arise,

And fierce for revenge were my follower's cries,

Till our banners wav'd free and alone in the skies.

We have hew'd with our swords, hurrah !

The lover of many a maid,

With his long light locks round the wild wolf's jaw,

When the morning arose in its beams array'd,

At Ila's firth I saw ;

And many a widow ere then had I made ;

Many a buckler was cloven in twain ;

And the blood of the valiant was pouring like rain,

When gallant King Orn in the fight was slain.

We have hew'd with our swords, hurrah !

My life must quickly end,

For the poison is pouring thro' every vein.

Great Odin, to Ella my sons but send,

Their swords in his blood to stain,

If Lodbrok, though dying, thou'lt yet befriend.

For I know when they hear how their father died,

That their heart-blood will boil in a furious tide,

And to battle they'll rush with the warrior's pride.

But my sword shall hew no more,  
 And my battles all are o'er;  
 For hark! I hear my call,  
     And it sounds in accents wild and free;  
 And soon I'll be in Odin's hall,  
     And Vahalla's chiefs shall welcome me;  
 But highest I'll sit amongst them all.  
     Fresh shall the combat be every day;  
     So joyous I hasten, away, away;  
     And die with a cheer on my lips—HURRAH!

The next poem to which I shall call your attention is an imitation of the lays of the ancient Skalds. It is perhaps equal as a poem, but not as an imitation, to that which I read to you last evening. It is entitled "The Sword Chaunt of THORSTEIN RAUDI;" and in it the warrior sings the praises of the weapon to which he owed so much:—

'Tis not the gray hawk's flight o'er mountain and mere;  
 'Tis not the fleet hound's course, tracking the deer;  
 'Tis not the light hoof-prints of black steed or gray,  
 Though swelt'ring it gallop a long summer's day,  
 Which mete forth the lordships I challenge as mine:  
     Ha! ha! 'tis the good brand  
     I clutch in my strong hand  
 That can their broad marches and numbers define.  
     Land giver! I kiss thee.

Dull builders of houses, base tillers of earth,  
 Gaping, ask me what lordships I own'd at my birth;  
 But the pale fools wax mute when I point with my sword  
 East, west, north, and south—shouting, "There am I lord!"  
 Wold and waste, town and tower, hill, valley, and stream,  
     Trembling, bow to my sway  
     In the fierce battle fray,  
 When the star that rules fate is this falchion's red gleam.  
     Might giver! I kiss thee.

Far isles of the ocean thy lightning hath known;  
 And wide o'er the mainland thy horrors have shone.  
 Great sword of my father, stern joy of his hand,  
 Thou hast carv'd his name deep on the stranger's red strand,  
 And won him the glory of undying song.  
     Keen cleaver of gay crests—  
     Sharp piercer of broad breasts—  
 Grim slayer of heroes, and scourge of the strong!  
     Fame giver! I kiss thee.

My kindred have perish'd by war or by wave;  
 Now childless, and sireless, I long for the grave.  
 When the path of our glory is shadow'd in death,  
 With me thou wilt slumber below the brown heath—  
 Thou wilt rest on my bosom, and with it decay;  
     While harps shall be ringing,  
     And scalds shall be singing,  
 The deeds we have done in our old fearless day.  
     Song giver! I kiss thee.

Here is another poem referring to that expedition of Earl Sigurd to Ireland, of which I told you yesterday evening. When Sigurd and his men were absent, and on the day when the battle of Clontarf was fought, one DAURRUD—so goes the legend—was walking over the hill of Syssag, which, I daresay you are aware, bears to this day an equivocal sort of reputation. There, it is said, he came upon twelve gigantic women, who turned out to be the CHOOSERS OF THE SLAIN—goddesses who were present at every battle, to mark for Odin how each man fought. They were weaving a web made of human entrails, and as they wove, they sang this song. It is translated, though not very literally or very well, by Gray. I can only read a small portion:—

Ere the ruddy sun be set,  
Pikes must shiver, javelins sing,  
Blade with clatt'ring buckler meet,  
Hauberk crash, and helmet ring.

As the paths of fate we tread,  
Wading through the sanguine field,  
Goudula and Geira, spread  
O'er the youthful king your shield.

We the reins to slaughter give—  
Ours to kill and ours to spare:  
Spite of danger, he shall live  
(Weave the crimson web of war).

They whom late the desert beach,  
Pent within its bleak domain,  
Soon their ample sway shall stretch  
O'er the plenty of the plain.

Low the dauntless earl is laid,  
Gor'd with many a gaping wound;  
Fate demands a nobler head—  
Soon a king shall bite the ground.

Long his loss shall Erin weep,  
Ne'er again his likeness see;  
Long her strains in sorrow steep—  
Strains of immortality!

Horror covers all the heath;  
Clouds of carnage blot the sun;  
Sisters, weave the web of death;  
Sisters, cease; the work is done.

Hail the task, and hail the hands;  
Songs of joy and triumph sing;  
Joy to the victorious bands;  
Triumph to the younger king.

Sisters, hence with spurs of speed;  
Each her thund'ring falchion wield;  
Each bestride her sable steed;  
Hurry, hurry to the field.



Finally, here is an imitation of one of the ruder and simpler of the ballads of the Skalds. It is entitled

### THE LANDING AT THE HUMBER.

Ho! we were a band of rovers,  
Sailing here, and sailing there;  
Sailing where the wild winds bore us—  
None to stay our course might dare.

Once we spoil'd the Saxon land—  
Vikings bold, though few in number;  
And we fought a merry fight  
In the landing at the Humber!

Gaily blew and roar'd the breezes,  
Wav'd our ravens on the gale,  
Forward bounded Norway's galleys,  
Wing'd with many a bellying sail.

Up we rush'd along the Humber;  
Fair-hair'd Rogvald led the way;  
Till we saw the wealthy city,  
Close beside the sandy bay.

When the Saxons saw us coming,  
Quickly did they line the shore;  
Arm'd with costly spears and axes,  
Twice two hundred men and more.

Then we bounded from our galleys  
To our middles in the tide;  
And we rush'd to meet the Saxons,  
With the Nordman's battle stride.

Then arose the joyous clanging,  
Of the sword upon the mail;  
Mingled with the shavelings' clamour,  
And the Saxon women's wail.

Soon in broad and deep'ning volume,  
Rush'd along the streams of gore;  
And it cheer'd each hero's spirit,  
To behold the corpse-clad shore.

There the gash'd and dying Saxon  
Writh'd and struggled in his pain;  
Shrieking as his coward spirit  
Pass'd away to Holla's reign.

But each Viking that had fallen,  
Quietly lay upon the strand,  
Gazing on the joyous battle—  
Grasping still his ruddy brand;

While whole heaps of hostile corpses  
Round him all the ground did cumber;  
Telling Thor how he had quit him  
In the landing at the Humber.

Soon the crows were o'er us wheeling—  
Soon they settled to their prey;  
Well they know the Nordman's war-cry,  
Bearing onwards through the fray.

Soon the Saxon ranks were broken,  
 And they turn'd their backs to flee;  
 But they 'scaped not thus the vengeance  
 Of the masters of the sea.

For we chas'd them to the mountains,  
 And we slew, and slew, and slew,  
 Till the hardest steel was blunted;  
 They who 'scaped were fleet and few.

When we turn'd toward the city,  
 Wolves were settling to their food;  
 Bravely did they thank the Nordmans,  
 Gnashing jaws all smear'd with blood.

Then we stor'd our barks with plunder,  
 And at eve we fir'd the town;  
 And its flames dispell'd the darkness,  
 As we floated gaily down.

Thus we spoil'd the wealthy city—  
 Vikings bold, though few in number;  
 Thus we fought a merry fight  
 In the landing at the Humber.

Such is a sort of specimen of the literature of our forefathers—of the songs that were chanted beside Caithness firesides of old, by those from whom you and I are lineally descended.\* I cannot take time to point out how these songs illustrate the various elements of the Scandinavian character, but they do so most unmistakeably. And reflections of thankfulness that our lot has been cast in other times, I must leave you to make for yourselves, as I doubt not that some will do.

Here, then, I must somewhat abruptly conclude these lectures. They have already extended far beyond the limits which I at first designed; and yet, notwithstanding this, I feel that I have only begun to say what I would wish. In fact, if I had time to write, and you to listen (neither of which things, however, are the case), it would be easier for me to compose ten lectures than two, on a subject so extensive, and so fruitful of the deepest thought concerning the ways of God to man. I am well aware of many imperfections in what I have had time to say; but these have been largely unavoidable, on account of the wideness of my subject, and the shortness of my time—of my time, both for writing and for reading to you these remarks. And yet, great as my deficiencies have been, I venture to indulge the hope that these lectures may not be in vain for higher purposes than any that are merely temporary. I cannot draw out for you the thoughts which it seems to me that the field we have been traversing should suggest. Yet, I would fain hope that many such thoughts will be aroused by the remembrance of the simple facts, which I have so hurriedly set before you. I have only furnished

\* Many of those who are acquainted with the subject, will think I have not made a very judicious selection from the ancient literature of Scandinavia. They will wonder at my dealing so much in imitations, and at my giving the loose and highly Anglicised paraphrase of Gray as a specimen at all; but, the truth is, that I had to do the best I could, with the help of the very few books beside me when the lectures were written.

some materials for thought; you, I trust, will use them. And as you walk henceforth beside that unrivalled bay, over which swept the galleys of these sea kings, a thousand years gone by, and as you listen to the thunder of the waves that are sounding now unchanged even as they sounded then, it may be that the remembrance of these long-past times will help to meditation, more solemn and deep than usual, on the awful importance of which it is that we should find the true aim and principle in life, and do our God-appointed work ere we too pass away, like those who were once as familiar as we are with these rocks and fields, and whose very names are now no longer heard on earth.

And now does it seem like taking that step which proverbially is all that separates the sublime from the ridiculous, to pass from such themes as these to requesting you to take an interest and a share in the erection of a *Washing House* and an *Infant School*? It may do so to some. It will not do so to those who have gazed into these past ages with any real appreciation of the true meaning and lesson which they contain for us. That meaning and lesson is this—that we should not be content only to read of or admire these times, but should actively use and add to any legacy of good that they may have handed down. Better far than any amount of pleasurable excitement, of feelings melted to tenderness or roused to admiration, is a single quiet and unnoticed action deliberately done for love to God or man. To us, as I have abundantly shewn, the legacy of the ages has been large and liberal. It is ours to take advantage of it now. The energy, the free and generous impulse, the high-strung daring, which made the Scandinavians the conquerors, and, better far than that, the leaders of the nations in all their noblest enterprises, have not surely departed from this their ancient home. Far be it from me to flatter ourselves. We have little need of that. We are hereditarily prone to have an opinion at least sufficiently high of our own merits and capabilities; and we have defects and faults, though my theme has not led me to dwell so much on them, which are enough, and surely glaring enough, to keep us humble. Yet this remains, that there are among us powers, and an hereditary force and dignity of nature, which, if duly cultivated, might issue in results specially important, not only to the individuals themselves—not only to this out-of-the-way community—but to the nation, and to the world at large. This I say deliberately. And surely it is a consideration that should nerve for every effort it may seem right that we should now put forth. And let us remember too, that the character which we inherit is one that needs, as surely as it will repay, careful cultivation. For evil, if not for good, it is one that must be remarkable. More rapidly than any other race does ours, when it is neglected and on the downward road, relapse into all its old ferocity, and into rioting in all manner of brutality. Animated by fear of such a result as that, and far more by the encouraging thoughts that we have such a promising field to labour in—a field whose harvest may be expected to gladden distant climes and ages—

be it ours to labour in earnest now, at whatever tends to benefit those who are rising in our midst. And think not that the object in view at present is one too trivial to call into play motives such as these. It is true that I would still more willingly plead for some other objects—say, for calling forth, if I could, some general and determined effort to provide a high and a Christian education for the more thoughtful of our country's youth, who might, if thus helped forward, stand second in no respect—I know it well—to any that Britain can produce. Yet the object now before us is, in its own place, most important. Every opening for good, really taken advantage of, tells in every direction. It tells directly; it tells, too, by opening the way, and preparing for still higher progress. And that there is an opening for good here, I think we shall readily believe, on the simple testimony of those who have been already honoured to effect so much through this Institution. Or, if proof be demanded, it will, I doubt not, be at once forthcoming.

The world in which we are dwelling, during this stage of our existence, is a sad and terrible one in many respects; yet it is a joyful one in this—that in it no single loving action is ever lost. It may be lost to the eye of man; though but seldom is it even that, if our eyes are open: yet, true it is for evermore, that so much as a cup of cold water, bestowed by love, shall not fail of its reward. Every child that is well trained here is a step towards a happy and rightminded household, from which, in the future ages, sons and daughters shall rise to lead men towards truth, and light, and love—not only here at home, but in India and China, in America, and the distant continent and islands of the south, and, it may be, in nations whose very name the scroll of Time has never yet unrolled. Thus, as the fruit even of your efforts now, the remote posterity of those whose deeds I have been telling you of to-night, shall go forth with more than their fathers' courage and skill, to conflicts and to victories higher and more holy than were ever won by them. Thus shall the children of the north contribute no small help towards the bringing about of that

“One far off divine event

To which the whole creation moves”—

even the arrival of the time

“When the war-drum throbs no longer, and the battle-flags are furled,  
In the parliament of man, the federation of the world;  
When the common sense of most shall hold a fretful realm in awe,  
And the kindly earth shall slumber, lapt in universal law.”

Or rather, let me substitute for the fancies of the poet, words that are sure and steadfast, and ask you now to help—as I have proved to you that, by means of the character on which you have to work, you can do most powerfully—to help on the time when, even of this saddened, sinful, error-darkened earth, it may be truly said “That its sun shall no more go down, neither shall its moon withdraw itself, for the Lord shall be its everlasting light, and the days of its mourning shall be ended.”

## APPENDIX.

---

HOPING that my readers will be interested in the subject so cursorily noticed in these lectures, I add some account of the books by which, so far as is known to me, its study may be best and most easily pursued.

First of all, I may mention three volumes of the **EDINBURGH CABINET LIBRARY**, published by Oliver & Boyd—viz., **SCANDINAVIA, ANCIENT AND MODERN** (2 vols.), and **ICELAND, GREENLAND, AND THE FAROE ISLANDS**. They give us accurately and succinctly the skeleton, as it were, of the history of the Scandinavian race, from its origin to the present day; and though, from their extreme condensation, they are not so interesting as they might otherwise be, they are most valuable as an introduction to works that are fuller and more philosophic. These, with **MALLET'S NORTHERN ANTIQUITIES** (Bohn & Co., London), will give a good general idea of the greater part of the subjects treated of in the lectures. This last volume is a full and careful account (though, like the former works, too full of matter to be exactly popular,) of the religion and mythological literature of the Northmen.

Then there is the **HEIMSKRINGLA, OR CHRONICLE OF THE KINGS OF NORWAY**. This is a translation, by the late Mr Laing of Papdale, aided by his son, the present Indian Chancellor of Exchequer, of the great work of Snorro Sturle's son, an Icelandic gentleman of the thirteenth century. It is a history of Norway from the earliest times, down almost to the era of the author; and though accessible to the English reader only in this translation, which is evidently very far from a good one, it cannot fail to strike all as one of the most careful, vivid, and impartial of histories. In the introduction to this work, and also in his **TOUR THROUGH GERMANY AND SCANDINAVIA**, as well as in other volumes, Mr Laing has made most important contributions to our knowledge of the Scandinavians of ancient times and of our own.

A most valuable work, for one wishing to understand the character of the Scandinavian race, is **THE LITERATURE AND ROMANCE OF NORTHERN EUROPE**, by William and Mary Howitt (Colburn & Co., London). It gives a brief but interesting sketch of the Eddas, the Sagas, and the songs produced by the period of the greatest activity of the northern mind; that is, from the tenth to the fourteenth century. It tells also of the revival of that activity in modern times.

But it is in the translations from the Norse of Dr DASENT, that we have the most trustworthy information regarding Scandinavia and its children, and the most impartial estimate of their character and influence on the world. His introductions to his books, though unsatisfactory from that brevity which is yet their beauty, are exactly what is needed to procure for those of whom he writes the justice which, in this country alone, has been so long denied them. And the works themselves are so translated that all thought of their being translations nearly disappears. In them we have perhaps the most successful transfusion of thought and feeling from one language to another that recent times have given us. The chief of Dr Dasent's publications are, **POPULAR TALES FROM THE NORSE**, and **THE STORY OF BURNT NJAL**. In the former, we have the originals of most of our own old nursery tales, and many an amusing and instructive legend besides. Trivial as these may seem to some, there is more true wisdom—more insight into life, its meaning and

solemnity, to be got from them than from all the books of science made easy with which our nurseries are now-a-days inundated. And for giving a notion of the heart of man—of its mingled good and evil, baseness and nobility—I know nothing equal to them, apart from Scripture and such books as are drawn directly from it. BURNT NJAL is an account—composed probably between 1050 and 1100, and committed to writing not very long thereafter—of an Icelandic feud, which took its rise about the end of the tenth century. In it Njal (i.e. Niel), one of the best and wisest men whom Iceland has produced, was burnt with all his household; and the saga is an account of the events that led to this, and the vengeance that was taken for it. It contains a brief narrative of the planting of Christianity in the island, and is most interesting, as shewing the slow degrees by which its spirit overcame the ancient heathenism.

Besides these, Messrs Edmonston & Douglas (Dr Dasent's publishers) hope to bring out, before the end of the year, a translation, from his pen, of the ORKNEYINGA SAGA, or the history of our own northern earldom. While important for all who study history, this will surely be of the very greatest interest to those who live in the midst of the scenes to which the narrative refers. There is already, I believe, an English translation of this ancient saga, but it is not easily procured, and besides, a translation from one who is so thorough a master of the two languages as Dr Dasent, is well worth waiting for. He also promises ere long a translation of the YOUNGER EDDA.

Of the many books of travels descriptive of the present condition of the inhabitants of Scandinavia and Iceland, the best, so far as I have read, are HENDERSON'S ICELAND; THE OXONIAN IN ICELAND; and THROUGH NORWAY WITH A KNAPSACK. This last, though that earnest, God-fearing spirit, which alone can enable a man to see deeply into anything, is wholly wanting in it, is yet, with regard to outward facts, about the shrewdest and most observing book of travel I have ever seen.

But the most interesting and important topic raised in the lectures, and the one which I should most wish to see earnest attention drawn to, is that of the influence of the Scandinavians upon Britain and her history. In this influence, the aim, the final cause so to speak, of all their training is to be found. It is not by means of unmixed races that we find the divine purposes most advanced on earth. A pure race is necessarily one-sided and therefore comparatively weak. It is by nations drawn out of several peoples, who have each of them contributed some peculiar element of strength, that most can be done to carry on that long and painful process by which the world is being brought back to God. And it was chiefly, I believe, to give its energy, its courage, its love of freedom and of truth, to the nation that is foremost in every corner of the earth just now, that the Norwegian race was formed and trained. Now, it is but as of yesterday that their influence on Britain has begun to be recognised among us, and therefore there are as yet but few books bearing directly on the subject. The chief known to me are WORSAAE'S DANES AND NORWEGIANS IN ENGLAND AND SCOTLAND; and VAUGHAN'S RACES OF MEN IN ENGLAND. LATHAM'S BRITISH ETHNOLOGY also treats of the Scandinavian element in our population. The statistical accounts and most of the county or other local histories of which there are now so many, are of course valuable as furnishing materials for one who has time and patience for original research; though most of their writers are misled in their own conclusions by the erroneous notions, or rather the utter want of notions on ethnology, which until lately, have everywhere prevailed among us.

Among these local histories, I may specially mention the various works on Orkney as by BARRY, PETERKIN, and BALFOUR; and CALDER'S HISTORY OF CAITHNESS. Many of Mr Calder's conclusions concerning the early history of the county, are indeed erroneous; but on the whole, his work, so far as it goes, is admirable, and is one for which all Caithness-men should feel indebted to him. As Mr C., however, says himself, it is but a sketch. There are materials for a far fuller and more philosophic history of the county. And such was the mingling of races in Caithness, and its connection at once with

Scotland, with Norway, and with Normandy, that I question if there be many counties in the empire of which it would be more important that a thoroughly good history should be written. Here also I may mention Dr Macculloch's work on the Highlands; in the fourth volume of which the question of the origin of the Highlanders is, I understand, ably and impartially discussed. I understand, I say, that it is so, for I have not read this work myself.

Perhaps the best aid to forming a definite and correct idea on this part of the subject, is the *ETHNOLOGICAL MAP OF BRITAIN* in Keith Johnston's *PHYSICAL ATLAS*. It and the explanatory letterpress are by Dr Gustaf Komet, whom I have already mentioned in the notes. It is the first attempt of the kind; and for the almost unaided production of one man, is perfectly wonderful in its accuracy. There are indeed errors in it—as the author himself says most truly, that in the circumstances there could not but be. For instance, Orkney is set down as Celtic in an equal degree with the centre of Sutherland! And probably there are similar mistakes in districts of which I know nothing. Still the map is a marvel of diligent and discriminating research; and in the accompanying letterpress, the foundation of British Ethnology is firmly laid.

Finally, I may add that a full account of the Varangians in Constantinople, and of the conquests of the Normans in Italy, will be found in GIBBON, and other histories of those ages.

With many of the statements in many of these volumes I entirely disagree; and from some of them I differ wholly on points far more important than any of a historical kind. Still it is only by reading and comparing several of them, by forming his own opinion on the materials of thought they give, and, most of all, by using his eyes and ears in moving through his own country, that the English reader can become thoroughly acquainted with this subject. As yet there is no single volume in the language that even professes to treat of the Scandinavian race, its character and training, and its influence on the character and destiny of Britain. It is perhaps as well that, in the meantime, there should not be. Before this, such a volume could not have been written at all satisfactorily. But now, with the large accumulation of materials that has been making in Copenhagen, with the light that has recently been cast on comparative philology and mythology, and, most of all, with the true historic sense that seems beginning to awake among us, a thoroughly good treatment of the subject should not be at all impossible.

Without understanding its ethnology, it is as impossible to understand the history of any nation as it is to appreciate the full significance of a man's life without a knowledge of the influences under which he passed his infancy and boyhood. And it is by tracing up nations to their source—by appreciating the way in which each has been disciplined in all its course, in order to contribute its special elements of life and strength to the Church of Christ, which shall yet be co-extensive with mankind—by understanding thus what is meant when it is said that God, though "He made of one blood all the nations of men," did yet "determine the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation:" it is thus that history will become, as it one day must, the great, the visible, the living testimony of the truth of revelation, and at the same time the chief interpretation of its meaning and rule of guidance for the application of its power. And though I know, as well as the least friendly critic, that in these lectures there is nothing very original, still I trust that they will lend a little help towards awakening some knowledge of history, and of its true significance. Knowing that they will be read by many, I cherish the expectation that they will stir up *some* to a thoughtful and earnest inquiry into the meaning and lesson of the bygone ages, or at the very least that they will help to prepare their minds for understanding and being benefited by that insight into the significance of the whole providential scheme of the world, which many things make me hope that God will ere long give us, through the instrumentality of some Christian historian of power. History, too, is of all others the study most congenial to

the northern race, and the one by means of which I would have most expectation of those who belong to it advancing the cause of Truth on earth.

Finally, since I expect that this publication will fall into the hands of few beyond those who know more or less of myself and my present circumstances, I think I may venture to mention another thought which I have been cherishing in connection with it. I hope that it will sometimes remind not a few of my going forth to bear on a banner more sure of endless victory than was ever the fabled Landeyda, of which these lectures tell. I hope it will prompt some occasionally to pray in earnest that the **RED-DEEMER** Himself may be with me, strengthening in all weakness, guiding in every difficulty, and thereby hastening the triumph of His own Banner of Salvation.









